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Thomas Chalmers









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THOMAS CHALMERS.





# THOMAS CHALMERS:

HIS LIFE AND ITS LESSONS.

BY

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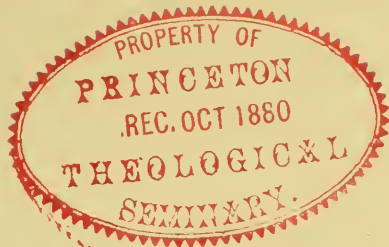
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## Preface.

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FOR the whole story of the life of Chalmers the reader must be referred to the every-way admirable Biography by Dr. Hanna. The only drawback to that work is its largeness. It could not have been made less, indeed, without doing injustice to its subject; and it is a great thing that we have so complete a record of such a remarkable history. But there is a demand in these days for compendious information about everything, and there seems a special propriety in supplying such information about Chalmers during the present year. The volume now published is not an abridgment of the standard Biography. It is a strictly independent work. But the writer has throughout followed, as far as possible, in the footsteps of Dr. Hanna, and has quoted from him frequently. When any sentence occurs in the suc-

ceeding pages within marks of quotation, but without special acknowledgment, it is to be understood as taken from his book. Our object has been to give a bird's-eye view of a career which may safely be called that of the greatest Scotchman of the century. The story in itself reads like a romance, it is so full of stirring incident. But it has a public as well as a private and personal value; for the life stretches over a memorable era in our history, and we may all learn lessons from what it tells of the past, for our guidance in the present and the future.

NORMAN L. WALKER.

*February 1880.*

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# THOMAS CHALMERS.

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## CHAPTER I.

FROM HIS BIRTH TO HIS INTELLECTUAL AWAKENING.



THE German schoolmaster who every morning bowed so respectfully to his pupils, on the principle, as he explained, that he saw among them the burgomasters and town-councillors of the future, was, I daresay, something of a time server. Yet there was some sense and shrewdness in the practice which he followed. For every new generation contributes its own contingent of leaders, and nobody can tell in advance in what quarter these may appear.

Indeed, genius has an odd habit of turning up where it is not looked for at all. When you want flowers of more than ordinary beauty, you seek them in the garden, of course ; you know that such things are to be found, not on the common, where they are exposed to every wind that blows, but in places where the soil is good, and where they have had the benefit of care and culture. It is natural to suppose that a like law should rule in human life ; —that is, that great men should always rise in localities where the outward conditions are favourable ; in cities, for

example, where civilization has been carried to the highest possible pitch; and in families, where all the appliances of a high-class education have been going on for several generations. But in point of fact such a law is not found to be in operation. Greatness does not run in the grooves we make for it. In quite unexpected places, and at quite unexpected times, the quality appears which raises a man above his fellows; and the world recognizes it as something which it cannot manufacture.

And there is one good and obvious reason for the uncertainty in which we are kept about this matter. The gift of a truly great man is the very greatest which can be bestowed upon a generation. The discovery of a gold or diamond mine must ever be a notable event in any country's history. It tends to increase its population, and to add in many ways to its material comforts. But wealth of that sort has its drawbacks, and neither California nor Australia has been, on the whole, much the better for its riches. There can be no doubt, however, about the permanent benefits conferred by a man who has at once genius and grace. It is not too much to say of him that he contributes to the enlargement of even the temporal resources of the community to which he belongs; for when people become more intelligent, and honest, and industrious, and frugal, they come to have what is really equivalent to gold. In any case, by making his age more virtuous, he makes it happier. Such a man, therefore, is a great gift of God. And it is right that that fact should be rendered conspicuous. For this reason we are always kept in doubt as to where our next luminary is to appear. That we may realize the existence of a divine government, God keeps the reins in his own hand, and sends us leaders as he thinks best. We cannot make them. We cannot command their appear-



ance when we please. And when one comes, we are bound to regard the circumstance as a new and special act of divine interposition in the affairs of men.

It is no disparagement to the old Fife burgh which gave birth to the greatest Scotchman of the century to say, that if the age had begun to speculate beforehand as to the quarter in which its next hero was likeliest to appear, it would not have thought of *Anstruther*. There were then in existence Scottish cities of the highest reputation for intelligence toward which the eye would have turned much more naturally. And so with the family from which Chalmers sprang. He had a most respectable ancestry. Among his "forebears" were ministers (one or two of them doctors of divinity), and even lairds. But if a visitor had had paraded before him the fourteen children of Mr. John Chalmers, "Dyer, Shipowner, and General Merchant," and had been told that the sixth of the number was destined to make his mark upon the period,—that his admiring fellow-countrymen would erect his statue in one of the streets of their capital,—and that the centenary of his birth would be celebrated as an incident of national interest and importance,—he would have felt probably as much surprise as Samuel did when the ruddy youth, who had been hastily summoned from the sheepfolds, was introduced to him as the chosen one who was to be king over God's people Israel.

Every American citizen, they say, cherishes the hope that his first-born may become President of the United States. Our aspirations in this country are more modest. We allow ourselves to dream in like circumstances only of "a peerage or Westminster Abbey." But in neither case is the imagination absolutely unwarrantable. It is just as true in ordinary life as it is in Scripture history. When-

ever there is a work to do God finds one to do it ; and there is, so far as we can tell, an equal chance of the doer being discovered in town or country, in the family of a rich man, or in that of one who has a struggle to maintain for bread.

The facts connected with the earliest chapter in the life of Chalmers can be stated in a sentence or two. He was born on the 17th of March 1780, and went to school at the early age of three—chiefly to escape the tyranny of a nurse, who did much to make his home-life miserable. In November 1791, before he was twelve, he was enrolled as a student in the University of St. Andrews ; and he had been at college for two full sessions before he wakened up to the consciousness of possessing those intellectual powers in the employment of which he was to find in his after history so much enjoyment. The date of this memorable experience was the winter of 1793-4—years which, we cannot forget, made the birth-time of modern Europe.

It is natural to search through this first stage of his life in order to ascertain if there was anything in it to show that the boy was father of the man. There is not much to tell, however, of special significance. That he was strong, merry, generous, fond of play, and good at it, can be affirmed of many who never afterwards became anything in particular. Nor can much stress be laid upon the circumstance that at a very early period he resolved to be a minister. There was much in his surroundings to suggest such a thought. His parents were pious people, and were, no doubt, on terms of intimacy with the inhabitants of various adjoining manses. And, besides, the time was when Scotch boys who had any thought in them were apt to turn to the pulpit almost instinctively.

But a few other things were noted which did seem to contain in them a more certain prophecy as to the future. One was the extraordinarily keen interest which he so soon manifested in the Pilgrim's Progress and in the Pictorial Bible. There was a third book which also took his fancy. This was a sort of romance ascribed to Bishop Berkeley, and describing marvellous adventures among the Algerine pirates. But Scripture scenes laid the strongest hold upon his imagination ; and, in illustration of this, it is told that when one evening he was missed after dark, he was found alone in the nursery, pacing up and down, and repeating to himself in an excited way, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son !" He was then only three years of age. This love for the Pictorial Bible remained with him through life, and Kitto's edition became his un-failing companion through all his very precious devotional readings.

One reason why Chalmers was so little stirred during his first two years at college was that his preliminary school education had been so imperfect. He had been under two masters in Anstruther, neither of whom seems to have possessed remarkable gifts ; but it was not their fault altogether that when he went to the university he could not spell his own tongue. This was owing mainly to his own idleness. A boy of twelve ought not, under any circumstances, to have been made a student of, but the step taken in his case was particularly unreasonable. For he had given no evidence beforehand of having acquired studious habits ; and in the end his friends ought to have felt thankful that no worse thing happened to him than this, that he practically missed the prelections of Dr. Hunter, one of the best classical scholars of the day, and spent the greater part of his time on the links, expending

his superfluous energy on the game of golf, or seeking occasional relief from that in the still more exciting sport of football.

And yet, one cannot on the whole regret that his life had such a beginning. Infant prodigies have not usually developed into much. Chalmers would never have become the man he was if he had had no genuine boyhood—if our first pictures of him had shown a youth eschewing play, poring ceaselessly over books, and growing prematurely old with the pale and sickly hue of overthought. What distinguished him in after life was this, that he was so manly and whole-souled; and we do not doubt that what helped to make him so, was the free, outgoing, open-air, unconstrained habits of his earlier years. That robustness of body which came to be so useful to him when he was called to mount the high “lands” of the Saltmarket, was gotten or strengthened on the sand bents of St. Andrews; and the physical vigour which he then acquired had, we may also allow ourselves to think, something to do with the healthy tone and wholesome robustness of his mind.

Besides, it is not for a moment to be supposed that, because his conscious intellectual awakening did not take place till he was fourteen, there was no real progress being sooner made in his education. He himself spoke at a later period of his special indebtedness to Dr. Hunter; and such direct influence as he could have exerted upon him must have been put forth during the two years of nominal idleness. Insensibly the preparation of his mind for activity was going on, and he probably learned a great deal more than either he or his friends were at all aware of.

## CHAPTER II.

FROM THE BIRTH OF HIS INTELLECT TO HIS CONVERSION.



THE first subject which thoroughly awakened the interest of Chalmers was mathematics. Professor Vilant, whose duty it was to teach that branch of learning in St. Andrews, was an invalid, and was obliged to employ assistants. The assistant who happened to be in charge in 1793-4 was Dr. James Brown, afterwards Professor of Natural Philosophy in Glasgow ; and it was to him that Chalmers owed, in a sense, the birth of his intellect.

“Of all the professors and instructors with whom I have ever had to do,” so he wrote after Dr. Brown’s death, “he is the one who most powerfully impressed me, and to the ascendancy of whose mind over me I owe more, in the formation of my tastes and habits, and in the guidance and government of my literary life, than to that of all the other academic men whose classes I ever attended.”

He afterwards showed, in eloquent and even indignant terms, how utterly absurd are the popular notions about mathematics. “It is not,” he argued, “a dry and mechanical study, in which there is nothing to stir the enthusiasm of ingenuous youth. Its fascinations are manifold and overpowering.” So, at any rate, he himself found them to be.

He was deeply moved by the new views which now opened before him ; and it was only after many years, and when other and higher interests came to absorb his mind, that the spell which was now woven around him was in some measure dissolved.

But there were also other things which contributed to complete the mental awakening which he now began to experience. He became keenly interested in ethics and politics. It was, indeed, hardly possible for any thoughtful person to avoid that in those days. It was the time of the first French Revolution, when many questions which were assumed to be settled were thrown anew into the crucible, and when men were compelled to look at points bearing on the constitution of nations not from the arbitrary and conventional standpoints of this party or the other—of Whig and Tory, for example—but in the light of what was demanded by the principles of eternal justice.

The well-known work of Godwin fell in Chalmers's way at this time, and the reading of it produced a profound impression upon his mind. That impression was strengthened by intercourse with certain "brave spirits" who had come under the peculiar influence of the era, and by whom what they called Toryism and Calvinism were alike regarded with contempt. The Moderatism with which, at this time, St. Andrews was overrun helped to create the very kind of atmosphere most congenial to free thinking. And for a season it actually seemed as if Chalmers were going to let go such moorings as he had had, and to drift entirely and unresistingly down the stream.

What arrested him and prevented this catastrophe was President Edwards's famous "Treatise on the Freedom of

the Will." That book affected him in an extraordinary way. Fitting in, as it did, so far with what he had already received from Godwin, he was prepossessed in its favour from the very outset. Both writers taught distinctly the doctrine of *Necessity*. Chalmers soon found, however, that Edwards had by far the more sublime conceptions of the two. Teaching that the whole series of events in the spiritual as well as in the material universe are linked unalterably together, he showed behind these not a blind law, but a living Person—God—directing freely the development of the system. With this idea the young student became "nothing short of enamoured." For nearly a twelvemonth he was in a sort of "mental elysium." The world presented itself to him in an entirely new aspect. The greatness and power and all-pervading energy of a Supreme Being filled his mind continually; and by such an air of what looked like piety did he come to be surrounded, that crowds gathered to the public hall at times to *hear him pray!* The prayers which he offered on those occasions revealed the state of his mind. There was in them a wonderful flow of eloquent words, containing vivid and ardent descriptions of the divine attributes; but they were intellectual efforts only, and displayed no consciousness whatever of spiritual need. In consequence of these changes, however, he grew to be a marked man in his university, and already some of his fellow-students were taking note of his talents and of the promise he was giving of future eminence.

In 1795 he was enrolled as a student of divinity. In 1796 he paid his first visit to England, keeping in the course of it a journal, which showed that, although he had been carried away in the manner described by the speculations of Godwin and Edwards, he still remained sober



and practical enough to take particular notice of whatever came in his way *en route*. He could tell, for example, when he came back, all about the locks on the Forth and Clyde Canal, and even how many steps there were in the stairs of Dumbarton Castle. In May 1798 he became tutor in a private family; but his position as such was most uncomfortable, and he left it as soon as the terms of his engagement permitted.

When not yet nineteen he applied to the Presbytery of St. Andrews to be taken on trial for license. Naturally enough the Presbytery objected on the ground of his age. But the law recognized the possibility of exceptional cases arising. Some relaxation was to be allowed in favour of "lads of pregnant pairts," and Chalmers, as he used laughingly to tell, came up to the description in question. At any rate, his application was granted, and he was formally authorized by his Church to preach the gospel on the 31st of July 1799.

It is very clear, however, that whatever may have been his motives for pressing so soon to the front, he was not animated by any consuming desire to tell people about the way of life. He did not even wait over the succeeding Sabbath to preach his first sermon within the bounds of his own Presbytery, but set out at once on his second visit to England. It was not till a month later, the 25th of August, that he at last appeared in a pulpit. The place was the Scotch Church, Wigan; and, if we may accept the testimony of his own brother James, his *debut* was, on the whole, a successful one. "His mode of delivery," says this possibly partial critic, "is expressive, his language beautiful, and his arguments very forcible and strong." "His sermon," he adds, "contained a due mixture both of the doctrinal and practical parts of reli-



gion ; but, *I think, it inclined rather more to the latter.*" The same letter which tells all this to the old people at Anstruther ends in rather a significant way. "*His mathematical studies seem to occupy more of his time than the religious*"—a fact which received immediately somewhat striking illustration. He was summoned down to Edinburgh with the hope of securing a situation there. That hope was not realized ; but he remained through the winter in the Scottish capital, attending the mathematical class of Professor Playfair, never preaching anywhere, except once at Penicuik, and dreading the call to occupy a pulpit as an "interruption" which he could only barely tolerate.

The attitude of mind thus indicated was maintained through another session. He returned to Edinburgh in November 1800, and gave himself up to the study of chemistry.

At last the time seemed to him to have arrived for entering on the work of his proper profession. Two spheres appeared to open before him. One was the parish of Kilmany, which was about to become vacant in consequence of the contemplated removal of Mr. Cook, the minister, to St. Andrews. The other was the assistantship at Cavers. The patronage of Kilmany was vested in the senate of his *alma mater*. It was an understood thing that the professors were to have each his turn in nominating to the college livings. Dr. Adamson, one of the number, and a relative of the Anstruther Chalmerses, was in this way found to have the key to the position, and he was not so unnatural as to overlook his own kith and kin. His young relative Thomas was promised the presentation, and Chalmers was then able with a light heart to go to Cavers until the expected transference of Mr. Cook had been completed.

With what views the new assistant entered on his work may be gathered from the fact that he did not think it necessary to reside in the parish, and that the following naïve description of his pastoral duties appears quite unaffectedly in a letter to his father: "Parochial examinations are quite common in this country. I begin that duty on Monday fortnight, and, as the parish is extensive, it will take me upwards of a fortnight to accomplish it." Residing with his friend Mr. Shaw in the manse of Roberton, seven miles away, he rode over to Cavers every Sabbath morning to preach, and returned again contentedly to his quarters when the service was over. This easy arrangement was interrupted by the necessity which arose for some repairs being executed at Roberton; but his tent was simply transferred to Hawick, and there he remained until he removed to his more permanent settlement in Fife.

On the 2nd of November 1802 Chalmers was elected minister of Kilmany. He was then only twenty-two years of age, and if he had been at that time what he afterwards became, it would have seemed to him that the undertaking of the cure of souls was a serious enough responsibility in itself; and that, in order to the proper discharge of the duties of his new office, there was little need for his mind being distracted by other occupations. But he had no true conception of the nature of the step which he was taking, and at the date of his appointment he was probably thinking less of it than of the class of mathematics which he was just going to begin in the University of St. Andrews. While he was in Cavers, he had applied successfully for the assistantship to Professor Vilant. It was the plan of his life to conduct the two offices—the academic and the ministerial—simultaneously;

and as his highest ambition was to fill a mathematical chair, it is not too much to say that he must have accepted the living of Kilmany very much as a matter of convenience.

His ordination did not take place till the 12th of May 1803, so that he was able to give his whole time during the session of 1802-3 to academic work. When this was over, an interval remained, which he proposed to spend in Edinburgh with the *literati* of that city. The announcement of this intention took his pious father by surprise. It appeared to him that before entering on the ministry it would be seemly to devote a brief season to meditation and prayer, and he suggested so much to his son. But the well-intentioned remonstrance only provoked an almost indignant reply. "I am astonished," wrote the son, "that the measure proposed in my last should appear in the slightest degree objectionable. I hope that my principles as to the important subject alluded to are already established, and that they do not require any extraordinary exercises of reflection at present. I have had sufficient time for reflection, and I do not see how the relaxation of a few days should have any effect in overthrowing those calm and decided sentiments which I have already formed. I confess I like not those views of religion which suppose that the business, or even the innocent amusements, of the world have a dangerous tendency to unsettle the mind for serious and elevating exercises.....I feel that the solitude of a few days would be to me a painful and unmeaning solemnity."

Under such circumstances the settlement took place, and from May to November he lived with scarcely a break in the parish whose spiritual oversight he had undertaken.

A man so loving-hearted and full of energy could not

pass a whole summer anywhere without making a distinct impression upon his neighbourhood. He did not give his strength to the pulpit in Kilmany ; much less did he now proclaim from thence that gospel which was by-and-by to be so much to himself. But the fact that he had more than ordinary talent could not be hid ; and as he went freely about among his people, they were irresistibly drawn to him by the unaffected simplicity of his nature, and the frankness and geniality of his manners. The summer of 1803 was not, therefore, spent altogether in vain. No spiritual fruit was gathered, but roots were struck which had in certain ways something to do with the grand after-growth.

Winter came, however, and with it the hope of a renewal of his academic engagements. Kilmany was so short a distance from St. Andrews, and his ministerial occupations engrossed him so little, that the idea of there being anything unreasonable in his continuing to act again as mathematical tutor seems never to have occurred to him. But in assuming that he would, of course, be appointed for the second time to the office, he reckoned without his host. Professor Vilant had no intention of doing so. Chalmers was of opinion that the dislike felt for him was the result of jealousy. The professor himself is suspected of having thrown out insinuations as to there being a want of competency. Anyhow, intimation was given to the minister of Kilmany that his services would not be required ; and with a pang, the bitterness of which it is easy to understand, the young and ambitious scholar saw a door deliberately closed against him through which he had hoped to pass to the distinction of a chair in one of his country's universities.

But he proved equal to the occasion. A crisis, he con-

sidered, had occurred in his life. Rightly or wrongly, he saw in what had happened indications of the existence of a conspiracy—of a conspiracy to shelve him. Telling the story afterwards, he said, “I was deserted both by my employer and the university, and my career was at last closed by the ignominy of a dismissal from my employment. I was now disposed of. I was consigned to the obscurity of the country. I was compelled to return in disgrace, and leave the field to my exulting enemies. They had gained their object—a name expunged from the list of competition—no further disturbance from interlopers—no literary upstart to emulate their delicious repose, or to outstrip them in public esteem—no ambitious intruder to dispel our golden dreams of preferment, or to rise along with us in the rich harvest of benefices.”

Once on a time, they say, St. Andrews was a good deal of a family preserve. The Hills and the Cooks had it all their own way ; and if the current traditions on this point are to be received, we can understand how there may have been some foundation for Chalmers’s belief, that those who were in snug possession of the field looked with misgiving at the ardent new-comer from Anstruther. Perhaps some of the professors may have given their votes for his appointment to Kilmany all the more readily that they hoped he would be content with his country living, and not bother them any more in the university.

If such was the plot, it was frustrated in a manner which must have confounded all their traditional notions of propriety. Chalmers actually resolved to beard the lions in their dens. Before the session commenced, it was proclaimed all over the town that he meant to open extramural mathematical classes of his own. The announcement caused quite a flutter in college circles. Some of the

professors cut the intruder on the street. Certain of his lady acquaintances, who were too polite to go that length, became quite appreciably colder in their manner; and although there were a good many students who wanted to join him, all of these did not dare to do so, for fear of being stopped in their course, or of losing their bursaries. Nevertheless he held on his way. As he had some spare time on his hands, he opened also classes in chemistry. And throughout the winter he fought his battle, and that with such good nature and courage and gallantry that in the end his very worst enemies were fain to capitulate, the very professor who was most implicated becoming the first to extend to him the right hand of friendship.

While thus, however, taking the university by storm, he was compelled to inquire whether he was not laying himself open to a damaging attack in the rear. Kilmany got very little of his attention that winter. He went out every Saturday to preach, and returned on Monday morning, and that was all that his parishioners saw of him during the week. There were some members of Presbytery who did not think this quite the thing, and with a great deal of fine moral indignation, Chalmers heard one day that his conduct was about to be made the subject of formal comment and complaint.

He faced his accusers boldly. He had, he contended, done nothing amiss. All the work required of him he had faithfully and conscientiously attended to, and he challenged any man to go through his parish and bring back a single charge of neglect of duty in any direction.

"What more," he loftily asked, "will the gentleman require of me? Has he any right to control me in the distribution of my spare time? I maintain he has none. I spurn at the attempt, as I would at the petty insolence

of a tyrant ; I regret it as the interference of an officious intermeddler. To the last sigh of my heart I will struggle for independence, and eye with proud disdain the man who presumes to invade it."

Next winter he asserted his independence by resuming his classes in chemistry ; but they occupied him for only two days in the week, and he justified his devotion of so much time to an occupation which did not lie naturally to the hand of a minister by saying : "It affords a rational and dignified amusement, and it fills up that spare time which I would otherwise fret away in indolence and disgust ; but it trenches upon no essential duty, and I expend as much effort upon the religious improvement of my people as any minister within the bounds of my Presbytery."

It is quite likely that Chalmers was correct enough in his estimate. Among the easy-going ministers of the neighbourhood there were no doubt some who spoke against the chemical lectures, but whose own spare time was spent in a very much less profitable way. But there was one drawback in the case of Chalmers, which took much of the pith and grace out of his defences. It was this—that his *heart* was obviously not in his profession. And what proved that, was his eagerness to leave it. In the winter of 1804 the chair of Natural Philosophy in St. Andrews fell vacant, and he at once became a candidate for it ; and when a few months later another opening occurred in Edinburgh, he eagerly sought there the post of Professor of Mathematics.

He was not successful in either application ; but the latter is memorable, because it was in connection with it that he first appealed to the public through the press.

Curiously enough, his theme was the one which had already given him so much vexation. It was sufficiently



hard that his co-presbyters and his own father should doubt about the compatibility of mathematical pursuits with his clerical responsibilities. But here was another sort of person—no less a man than Professor Playfair—actually insinuating the same thing. It is true that the offensive charge was only made incidentally in a single “passage” in a letter, and that, moreover, it was stated quite generally, with no special reference to him. But there could be no question that the cap fitted the minister of Kilmany. For him it had a personal sting; and, smarting perhaps under the pain of it, he sought relief in a pamphlet. How effectively he vindicated the claims of his profession to intermeddle freely with all wisdom is seen in the sentence which has often been quoted since.

“The author of this pamphlet,” says he, “can assert, from what to him is the highest possible authority, the authority of his own experience, that after the satisfactory discharge of his parish duties, a minister may enjoy five days in the week of uninterrupted leisure for the prosecution of any science in which his taste may dispose him to engage.”

What made the life of a minister such a light one in his view was, that it was so easy to write sermons. “There is,” he informed Professor Playfair, “almost no consumption of intellectual effort in the peculiar employment of a minister. The great doctrines of revelation, though sublime, are simple. They require no labour of the midnight oil to understand them; no parade of artificial language to impress them upon the hearts of the people.”

His own sermons, at this period, do not seem to have awakened any very great interest. This was owing, no doubt, in great part to their wanting substance in the evangelical sense, and to the absence of unction in their



delivery. But it is more than likely that they failed also because they did not even represent his mind. He did not think any intellectual effort was required to throw off a discourse, and the intellectual effort, accordingly, was not given. What he expended his mental activity upon was something entirely different—it was upon those gorgeous lectures in which he sought to stir up the enthusiastic interest of his classes in chemistry and mathematics.

And yet he had during this period his own earnest thoughts about religion, and his own distinct theories as to how men were to be benefited by it.

Upon one point he had quite made up his mind. He had a hearty dislike to evangelical religion. He was honestly convinced that it made light of the personal virtues, and gave an altogether fictitious value to the theological grace of faith. Hence, one day bending over the pulpit, and speaking so as to express in his manner the keenness of his aversion, he said: "Many books are favourites with you which, I am sorry to say, are no favourites of mine. When you are reading Newton's 'Sermons,' and Baxter's 'Saint's Rest,' and Doddridge's 'Rise and Progress,' where do Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John go to?"

Simple as the Kilmany folk might be, they knew very well that this apparently consuming anxiety about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, was not the real cause of the warning they were receiving. Zeal for the gospel was being used as the cover under which an attack was made upon books with which their minister was out of sympathy.

As to his own system, we have preserved to us a fairly intelligible summary of it.

"In what particular manner," said he, "the death of

our Redeemer effected the remission of our sins, or rather, why that death was made a condition of this remission, seems to be an unrevealed point in the Scriptures. Perhaps the God of nature meant to illustrate the purity of his perfection to the children of men; perhaps it was efficacious in promoting the improvement and confirming the virtue of other orders of being. The tenets of those whose gloomy and unenlarged minds are apt to imagine that the Author of nature required the death of Jesus merely for the reparation of violated justice, are rejected by all free and rational inquirers."

About the Atonement, in short; he recognized its value. Through it, is received the forgiveness of sins. But how it operates, he could not tell. One thing only was clear to him—namely, that the orthodox theory was incredible.

Then, with regard to the method of a sinner's justification, this is what he taught in the early days of his ministry:—

"The rewards of heaven are allied to the exercise of our virtuous affections. The faith of Christianity is praiseworthy and meritorious only because it is derived from the influence of virtuous sentiments upon the mind. Let us tremble to think that anything but virtue can commend us to the Almighty.....True, our best endeavours fall short of perfection; and, after all, we may be called unprofitable servants. But contemplating the wonders of redeeming love, and finding all the deficiencies of his imperfect virtue supplied by the atonement and propitiation of Jesus, we may go on our course rejoicing, assured that through Christ our sincere but imperfect obedience is looked upon by Heaven with a propitious eye."

One thinks of Chalmers at this time as resembling an

almost pent-up stream which is ever growing in volume and momentum, and which eagerly breaks forth at every opening, legitimate or otherwise, that is made for it. The ministry, as he then conceived of it, afforded far too narrow a channel for the full outflow of his energies. If the university had continued open to him, he might have been satisfied with what Kilmany and St Andrews combined could offer. But when his "enemies," as he called them, capitulated and became his friends, he had no longer a motive for maintaining a fight, and his classes for chemistry and mathematics were given up. After that, indeed, he still sustained in a manner the character of a scientific teacher by giving popular lectures, first in Kilmany, and next in his county town of Cupar. But such outlets were not sufficient; and it was, in one respect, a fortunate circumstance that a new interest was made for him by the events of the times.

Napoleon Bonaparte had conquered the continent of Europe, and was now waiting to bring England also to his feet. The very thought of such a possibility filled the soul of Chalmers with a sort of horror, and with more than characteristic ardour he threw himself into the movement set on foot to repel the invader. He himself joined a corps which was formed to prevent the French from landing in St. Andrews Bay—accepting in it two offices which are not usually held in conjunction, those of lieutenant and chaplain; and if he was not joined on the occasion by any recruits from among his parishioners in Kilmany, it could not have been from any lack in the strength of the language which he used in the pulpit to describe the importance of the cause.

Who can read without smiling such sentences as the following, spoken, as we may believe them to have been,

with kindling eye and a countenance glowing with honest indignation :—

“May that day when Bonaparte ascends the throne of Britain be the last of my existence ; may I be the first to ascend the scaffold he erects to extinguish the worth and spirit of the country ; may my blood mingle with the blood of patriots, and may I die at the foot of that altar on which British independence is to be the victim !”

If these words had been spoken by a mere stump orator, they might have been set down for tall talk, or for what the Americans call spread eagleism, but there cannot be a doubt that the preacher was as guileless and sincere now as he was in all his after life, and the apostrophe may be taken as evidence at once of the simplicity of his nature and of the extent to which he was moved.

The French did not attempt to cross the Channel, and so this scare passed away ; but the state of the country led Chalmers to study anew the subject of political economy, and the result was the publication of his first book—“An Inquiry into the Extent and Stability of the National Resources.” For the success of this book he showed an extraordinary anxiety. It sold well enough in Scotland, but what he wanted above all things was that it should take well in England. He pined for literary distinction. To be known in London became for the moment the height of his ambition ; and in his correspondence with his brother James, who had gone to stay there, and with Wilkie the painter, who was a son of the minister of Culter and an old acquaintance, he indicated that there was nothing he was not willing to do in order to secure the honour of a second edition. The book did receive some notice, and was more than worthy of the notice it got, because it contained some very striking and original suggestions ; but it did not set

the Thames on fire, and still the author had to wait for the something which was to secure for him the eminence to which he was destined.

It was Religion that was to raise him to the altitude which he finally achieved. But nobody can read even this chapter of his history without seeing that religion only turned to its own account powers which would sooner or later have made their possessor famous, to whatever department of life he chose to devote himself.

What strikes us about him (apart from that exuberance of mental energy which we have just been noticing) is that he possessed in an extraordinary measure such characteristics as the following: a freshness, fire, originality, and inventiveness of mind, which revealed the presence in him of that peculiar quality which we call genius; a wonderful power of acute and exact observation; and a whole-souled out-goingness of nature which made it certain that wherever he was set down he would not be a contemplative dreamer, but a very active force in life.

The popular idea of Chalmers is that he was essentially a great preacher. His own notion regarding himself was that he was cut out to be a military engineer! There can be no doubt, at any rate, about his interest in and his knowledge of mathematics. It was his earliest ambition to be a mathematical professor. He was far, however, from being a mere *homo unius scientie*. He would have undertaken gladly the teaching of natural philosophy, of chemistry, or of political economy. And it is not too much to say that, if some of the positions he aspired after had become his, he would to a certainty have thrown around them the lustre, not only of his matchless eloquence, but of new and striking discovery.

It was a curious instance of his far-sightedness that he

had gas tubes introduced into his new manse at Kilmany long before any one had thought of dispensing with lamps or candles. And so early as 1809 he was laying down principles which have been applied only within the last few years, to the raising of the income tax and the enlistment of soldiers.

Such a mind as his could not fail to see new things everywhere. He observed so carefully and with such an open and candid eye. It is quite refreshing, for example, to read the journal which he kept during his first visit to London. Nothing escaped him. He spent an hour with a chemist, and described minutely his apparatus. He saw the model of a cotton mill, and down went a sketch of its mode of working. He visited a museum of mechanical curiosities, and a descriptive catalogue was forthwith made of its contents. Nor did he confine himself to art. Nature was quite as attractive to him, and his pictures of it were quite as minute. He was delighted with Windsor. "I went down," he says, "to the terrace, and as I walked along the south of the castle, I swore in the gladness of my heart that never was scene so sweet or fair. The vivid green seen in patches through the fringe of luxuriant branches, the extensive lawns below, on which the peaceful cattle were grazing, the hum of the village, the grand association of majesty, his pious and amiable character, his selection of this quiet retirement as a refuge from the cares and the splendour of royalty, threw me into a train of emotions, soothing, tranquil, and elevating."

What a pleasant touch, too, is here; he was on the top of a coach on his homeward journey: "In passing through the wild succession of corn fields and picturesque cottages, with the evening sun shedding its quiet light over the landscape, I was struck with the figure of a woman

reading at a window, a sober reflection pictured on her countenance."

There is even something peculiarly suggestive in the amusingly vigorous language in which in those days Chalmers occasionally expressed himself. It speaks of an honest soul with no guile or affectation about it.

Travelling from Carlisle toward London he had as his fellow-passengers in the coach a lady and a gentleman, with whom, in the kindness of his nature, he tried to get into conversation. The lady was affable enough ; but for the gentleman, "I never witnessed in my life such a want of cordiality, such a cold and repulsive deportment, such a stingy and supercilious air, and so much of that confounded spirit, too prevalent among the books and fine gentlemen of the age.....I sustained my confidence. I upheld the timidity of the company, and had the satisfaction of reducing him at last to civility and complaisance."

"By the way," says he again, "I have no patience with Mrs. ——— ; not a particle of cordiality about her ; cold, formal, and repulsive ; a perfect stranger to the essence of politeness, with a most provoking pretension to its exterior ; a being who carries in her very eye a hampering and restraining criticism ; who sets herself forward as a pattern of correct manners, while she spreads pain, restraint, and misery around her ; whose example I abominate, and whose society I must shun, as it would blast all the joy and independence of London."

The unaffected heartiness with which he thus denounced the want of frankness in others, was, no doubt, caused by the consciousness which he had of having so much *humanity* in his own nature. A violent commotion must follow when two strong streams meet, coming from opposite directions.



My own recollections of Chalmers date from a very much later period. He was then spending that last decade, which, it was his theory, should be given as much as possible to rest and to preparation for eternity. His most active life, therefore, was over. But I can never forget how often, even at that time, there flashed forth signs of that many-sidedness which made him the great man he was, and which appeared so strikingly during the particular era in his history which has been reviewed in this chapter.

If you had met him on a winter's day, "stumping" along George Street towards his class-room in the (temporary) New College, your first thought would probably have found fit expression in the exclamation, "There goes an honest man!" His short, thick-set figure, comfortably wrapped up to resist the cold; his round, lustreless, wide-open eyes; and his steady but not very graceful gait, all suggested the idea that he was some clergyman from the country, who had lived all his days among the fields, and knew nothing either of the ways or the wickedness of the world. You might, indeed, have hesitated to come to such a conclusion if you had noticed what became increasingly plain as he advanced in life—his likeness to Luther. But certainly what his outward appearance led men chiefly to think of was his unaffected guilelessness. If, however, you had followed him to his class, you would have learned that that simplicity which formed one of the most beautiful features in his character was associated with what many look for only in the sophisticated—shrewdness, knowledge of men and things, an observation which nothing escaped, humour which cast his audience sometimes into convulsions, and a practical sagacity in business matters which one would not have been astonished at in a successful merchant,



but which nobody looks for in philosophical or theological professors.

There have been not a few men who have achieved greatness, because they adhered to one pursuit and came to excel in it ; but the noticeable thing here is that Chalmers showed unmistakably a capacity to excel in many things, and that this appeared in most conspicuous ways before he was eight-and-twenty.

## CHAPTER III.

FROM HIS CONVERSION TO HIS REMOVAL TO GLASGOW.



THE first step toward the higher life which Chalmers was now about to lead may be said to have been taken when he delivered his maiden speech in the General Assembly. This happened on the 25th of May 1809. The topic on which he discoursed was not one which seemed to furnish much scope for eloquence ; it bore on the augmentation of the stipends of the clergy. But there was no subject he touched into which he did not throw some freshness ; and besides, an opportunity was offered in the present case for the display of just those qualities of quiet humour, of shrewd common sense, and of practical sagacity which made him so much of a power in ecclesiastical economics in after life.

“It is quite ridiculous,” said he in closing, and pleading for an adequate support being given to the Christian ministry—“it is quite ridiculous to say that the worth of the clergy will suffice to keep them up in the estimation of society. This worth must be combined with importance. Now it is our part to supply the element of worth, and it is the part of the Court of Session to supply the element of importance. Give both worth and importance to the same individual, and what are the terms employed

in describing him? 'A distinguished member of society, the ornament of a most respectable profession, the virtuous companion of the great, and a generous consoler of all the sickness and poor around him.' These, Moderator, appear to me to be the terms peculiarly descriptive of the appropriate character of a clergyman, and they serve to mark the place which he ought to occupy. But take away the importance, and leave only the worth, and what do you make of him? what is the descriptive term applied to him now? Precisely the term which I often find applied to many of my brethren, and which galls me to the very bone every time I hear it—'*A fine body!*'—a being whom you may like, but whom I defy you to esteem; a mere object of endearment, a being whom the great may at times honour with the condescension of a dinner, but whom they will never admit as a respectable addition to their society. Now all that I demand of the Court of Teinds is to be raised, and that as speedily as possible, above the imputation of being '*a fine body*'—that they would add importance to my worth, and give splendour and efficacy to those exercises which have for their object the most exalted interests of the species."

When he sat down, inquiries broke out upon all sides, Who is this new man, who speaks so genially, so sensibly, so *pawkily*, and so well? Another turning-point, in fact, had been reached in his life. He had been known before to the *literati* of two universities, and within his own Synod of Fife; but now he had shown himself in the Assembly, and was thenceforth a marked man in the Church at large.

In particular, the speech which he now delivered brought him into contact with Dr. Andrew Thomson and the Brewsters, and he became in consequence a contributor

to the *Christian Instructor* and to the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*.

For the latter he undertook to write upon *Christianity*. He must have had his own special reasons for choosing this subject (it was assigned to him at his own very urgent request), but it does not appear that what attracted him to it was any peculiar love for its distinctive doctrines. He thought of it chiefly in an apologetic aspect, and conceived the idea of so stating the external evidences as to make the faith impregnable against all the assaults of unbelief. But although this may have been all that he himself expected to make out of the study, God had arranged differently. In entering upon this pursuit he had unwittingly set his face directly toward the light.

In returning from the General Assembly he was seized with an illness which kept him at home for two months. At the end of that time—the beginning of August—he was able to go down to Anstruther for a few weeks; but even then his restoration could not have been complete, for when he was on his way back he suffered a relapse which brought him into a far worse condition than ever. For four months he was confined to his room, for more than six he was unable to preach; and although in little more than a year he was discharging again all his parochial duties, it was a much longer time than that before he was again in all respects the man he had been. His ailment was an affection of the liver, which necessitated the employment of very severe remedies; and while these were being applied, he was reduced to such a state of weakness that he expected nothing else than death. A very solemnizing impression was produced on his mind by his thus being brought face to face with eternity.

“My confinement,” he wrote in February 1809, “has

fixed on my heart a very strong impression of the insignificance of time—an impression which I trust will not abandon me though I again reach the heyday of health and vigour. This should be the first step to another impression still more salutary—the magnitude of eternity. Strip human life of its connection with a higher scene of existence, and it is the illusion of an instant, an unmeaning farce, a series of visions and projects and convulsive efforts which terminate in nothing. I have been reading Pascal's 'Thoughts on Religion.' You know his history—a man of the richest endowments, and whose youth was signalized by his profound and original speculations in mathematical science, but who could stop short in the brilliant career of discovery, who could resign all the splendours of literary reputation, who could renounce without a sigh all the distinctions which are conferred upon genius, and resolve to devote every talent and every hour to the defence and illustration of the gospel. This, my dear sir, is superior to all Greek and all Roman fame."

Here, then, the second step of the process was taken. Affliction was used as God's minister to bring him to reflection; and, as the result, religion became no longer a secondary, but a primary concern with him.

But, with all that, he had still much to learn. He had been brought, in some measure, to realize the evil of sin, and especially the evil of the sin of ungodliness. He was also prepared now to attach far greater importance than formerly to the death of Christ. But he did not understand as yet that salvation from first to last is all of grace; and he still went about to establish, if he could, a righteousness of his own. While relying for pardon on the atonement, he did not conceive it to be reasonable to trust to it entirely for acceptance; and in order to put himself right

with God, he began a disciplinary process which was to issue, as he hoped, in the production of a pure morality—his own workmanship—by means of which he might make himself, in a degree at least, well-pleasing to God. “More than a year of fruitless toil had to be described ere the true ground of a sinner’s acceptance was reached, and the true principle of all acceptable obedience was implanted in his heart.”

The honest effort thus made, however, was not altogether vain. As we read the journal in which the history of it is told, we encounter again and again promises and prophecies of the coming dawn.

Thus, on a Sabbath evening at Anster, he writes: “Returned to my room for two hours betwixt tea and supper, and tasted the delights of piety.”

Again we read: “Rode to St. Andrews with Lucy. Made a good many calls there, and feel a growing indifference to university preferment. This I regret not.”

A few days later he says: “I am alarmed at the small and uncertain progress of the religious principle in my mind. O God! may the power of thy Son’s atonement be to me the effectual instrument both of comfort and of righteousness.”

This is significant too: “Preached as usual; the people, I thought, were attentive and impressed, particularly in the forenoon.”

And one can easily guess the direction in which his face was turning when we read the following: “Heard sermon in the forenoon at New Greyfriars’, and was much pleased with the manly and vigorous orthodoxy of Mr. Andrew Thomson.”

The day, however, did not really break until the 24th of December 1810, when we find this entry in his diary:

“Have begun to read Wilberforce, and hope to be much the better of it.” Next day he adds: “I am delighted with Wilberforce.”

The book whose perusal he had thus commenced was the “Practical View of Christianity ;” and the nature of the effect which it had upon his mind is told by himself in a letter written ten years after to his brother Alexander.

In that letter he says: “The effect of a very long confinement upon myself was to inspire me with a set of very strenuous resolutions, under which I wrote a journal, and made many a laborious effort to elevate my practice to the standard of the divine requirements. During this course, however, I got little satisfaction, and felt no repose. I remember that, somewhere about the year 1811, I had ‘Wilberforce’s View’ put into my hands, and as I got on in reading it, felt myself on the eve of a great revolution in all my opinions about Christianity. I am now most thoroughly of opinion—and it is an opinion founded on experience—that in the system of ‘Do this and live,’ no peace, and even no true and worthy obedience, can ever be attained. It is, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ When this belief enters the heart, joy and confidence come along with it. The righteousness which we try to work out for ourselves eludes our grasp, and never can a soul arrive at true or permanent rest in the pursuit of this object. The righteousness which, by faith, we put on, secures our acceptance with God, and secures our interest in his promises, and gives us a part in those sanctifying influences by which we are enabled to do with aid from on high what we never can do without it. We look to God in a new light: we see him as a reconciled Father; that love to him which terror scares away re-enters



the heart, and, with a new principle and a new power, we become new creatures in Jesus Christ our Lord."

The great change was now accomplished. After a long and toilsome journey through cloud and mist, he had reached the summit of the mountain; and as in the clear light of day he looked behind and around him, he no doubt wondered much that he had allowed himself to be so long entangled among the shadows. Not a mathematical chair, but the pulpit, now became the platform from which he addressed himself to the country, which it had always been his ambition to benefit; and even within the limits of his own rural parish of Kilmany it was very soon felt that he had got a fresh baptism for his work.

It was rumoured that at this juncture Chalmers made a dramatic display of himself before his congregation, telling them abruptly and in so many words that he had hitherto been walking in darkness, and had now been brought out into the light. The story, on the face of it, was an improbable one. He never thus gave any public intimation of his conversion. But the anointing which he had received infallibly bewrayed itself to his own people, and it could not long be hid from the outside world that a recruit of no small importance had been gained to the cause of Evangelism.

It is most interesting here again to glance through his journal, and to notice the straws which appear there to tell how the wind had begun to blow.

"*February 14, 1811.*—Rode on to Dairsie, and preached a Fast sermon there. Was much pleased with Dr. Macculloch's edifying and evangelical prayer. The people were most attentive; and I was gratified with the approbation of Dr. and Mrs. Macculloch and Mrs. Coutts—a kind of testimony that two years ago I would have despised."



"*March 15.*—Called on sick people in the village. I am a good deal weaned from the ardour for scientific pursuits; and let me direct my undivided attention to theology."

"*April 23.*—I am sensible of a growing acquiescence in the peculiar doctrines of the gospel as a scheme of reconciliation for sinners."

"*May 1.*—Got a present from Mr. Tait of Tealing of a sermon published by him upon the conversion of the Jews, with a complimentary note. This indicates a growing partiality for me on the part of the Evangelical clergy."

"*July 15.*—A minister, if he gives his whole heart to his business, finds employment for every moment of his existence; and I am every day getting more in love with my professional duties, and more penetrated with a sense of their importance."

"*August 11.*—Let me prepare for my future sacraments a long time before they come round, and when they do come round, give my whole strength to the examination of communicants, to the state of my own heart, and the impressive communication of my feelings at the time of delivery."

"*August 14.*—From a report of the Baptist missionaries, I am much impressed by the worth and utility of these Christians."

"*September 10.*—Received Bible reports, and am much impressed with the utility of these institutions. O God, may thy work be my delight!"

"*September 13.*—I have begun Baxter's 'Call to the Unconverted,' and intend it for circulation."

"*September 29.*—Preached at Cults to an attentive audience. I tried to impress my peculiar views on Mr. D. Wilkie" [the artist].

No complaint was now made by Chalmers that he could not find within the sphere of his ministerial work sufficient scope for the exercise of all his energies. He read largely, but it was chiefly in the literature of theology. He wrote extensively, but it was on subjects bearing on the interests of religion. And when he had occasion to visit other places, it was not to refresh his spirit by intercourse with the *litterati*, but to use the many opportunities which offered themselves to aid in the extension of the kingdom of Christ.

His church at Kilmany became crowded ; but that was not the best proof he got of the success of his ministry. Another, and one far more satisfactory, was this, that there by-and-by occurred a religious awakening. Two young men, meeting after service one day, asked each other if there had not been something peculiar that morning in the preaching. God's Spirit had in fact laid hold upon them. They came to their minister as anxious inquirers, and as such became the first-fruits of a spiritual harvest.

"The discovery that pardon and full reconciliation with God are offered to all men gratuitously in Christ had been the turning-point in his own spiritual history ; and the most marked characteristic of his pulpit ministrations after his conversion was the frequency and fervour with which he held out to sinners Christ and his salvation as God's free gift, which it was their privilege and their duty at once and most gratefully to accept."

"He would bend over the pulpit," said one of his hearers, "and press us to take the gift as if he held it that moment in his hand, and would not be satisfied till every one of us had got possession of it. And often when the sermon was over, and the psalm was sung, and he rose to pronounce the blessing, he would break out afresh with

some new entreaty, unwilling to let us go until he had made one more effort to persuade us to accept of it."

We have seen what he said to Professor Playfair in the days of his ignorance, about preaching. Sermons were then so easily composed that it was the easiest thing in the world to throw them off. After his change, he regarded the pulpit and its claims in quite a new light. "The result was a series of discourses, a goodly number of which, delivered almost verbally as originally written, were listened to in after years by congregated thousands, in Glasgow and Edinburgh and London, with wondering and entranced admiration." "They were to a great extent the spontaneous products of that new love and zeal which divine grace had planted in his soul, the shape and texture of their eloquence springing from the combined operation of all his energies—intellectual, moral, and emotional—whose native movements were now stimulated into a more glowing intensity of action by that controlling motive which concentrated them all upon one single and sublime accomplishment—the salvation of immortal souls."

It was an infallible sign in those days that a man was an Evangelical, that he took an interest in the Bible Society.\* The Church of Scotland had no missions of its own till long afterwards; but an early and keen interest was taken by many in it in the circulation of the Word of God. This mark very speedily showed itself at Kilmany; but at a very early date also Chalmers manifested a deep

\* The Rev. Alexander Forrester, minister of Linton, writing to a daughter of Dr. Chalmers of Kilconquhar, on the occasion of her great relative's second speech in the General Assembly, thus indicates what was the current sentiment among Moderate ministers: "I am not sure that your father would have engaged with the ardour with which the minister of Kilmany does in missionary and Bible societies. *For my own part, I must own to you that I have never yet seen any proper call to us for engaging in the measures of these societies; and such is the feeling of this part of this county with very few exceptions.*"

concern in the direct evangelization of the world, and not a few can still remember with what a fresh and beautiful complacency he was in the habit, to his latest years, of telling how Andrew Fuller, the friend of Carey and the first secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, once spent a couple of days in his country manse.

Mr. Fuller himself was no less deeply interested in this Scottish country minister. "I never think of my visit to you," he wrote, "but with pleasure. After parting with you, I was struck with the importance which may attach to a single mind receiving an evangelical impression." There was, according to the English visitor, just one drawback to him—he read his discourses instead of delivering them. "If that man," he remarked to a friend—"if that man would but throw away his papers in the pulpit, he might be king of Scotland." Mr. Fuller was wrong for once. Chalmers never read in a formal or mechanical way. As the old woman pithily expressed it, his was *fell reading*. And, constituted as he was, it would not have added to his power, but the contrary, if he had tried habitually to dispense with his manuscript.

It was during this last period in his history that Chalmers married (August 4, 1812) Miss Grace Pratt, a daughter of Captain Pratt of the 1st Royal Veteran Battalion. He had reason to know beforehand that she was like-minded with himself, but he was particularly delighted to find, when the housekeeping had fairly begun, that she was prepared "to hold up her face for all the proprieties of a clergyman's family," and even to extend them beyond what he had himself proposed. What he referred to was, that at her suggestion the practice was begun of having family worship in Kilmany twice a day! It is curiously significant to notice his own struggles in

regard to this habit of family worship. For years, apparently, he had none. Then he began to offer a prayer at night, and was sometimes tempted to omit even that when anybody was in the house on whose sympathy he could not count. By-and-by he introduced the reading of a chapter of the Bible. Worship on Sabbath morning was the next innovation. And at last, under the kindly influence of his wife, the institution was fully established.

One other thing only may be here noticed. It has been seen that, when he was first settled, the idea of there being anything objectionable in a man teaching in St. Andrews, and holding at the same time a country cure, appeared to him simply preposterous. Now things presented themselves to him in a different light; and when it was proposed that Mr. Ferrie, who was at the time Professor of Civil History, should also be appointed minister of Kilconquhar, he was not deterred by a regard for what might be called consistency from earnestly and perseveringly resisting the arrangement. Not that he wished to tie any one down to such a strict discharge of purely ministerial work as to make the doing of anything else an offence. He himself was at this time a laborious contributor to the *Encyclopædia*, to the *Instructor*, the *Eclectic Review*, &c. To use the press for religious purposes he held to be the duty of all Christian men who could use the pen. But he knew by experience how utterly incompatible were the two offices of minister and professor, and with characteristic singleness of purpose he steadfastly set his face against the continuance of such a conjunction in the Church of Scotland.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TRON.



IN the autumn of 1814 the Tron Church, Glasgow, became vacant by the translation of Dr. Macgill to a chair in the university. The appointment to the vacant living was in the hands of the Town Council ; and as that body was so far a popular one, open to be affected by the religious currents which were running through the country, there arose a keen party contest about the succession, those on the one side being Moderates, those on the other Evangelicals.

The eyes of some among the latter having been directed toward Mr. Chalmers of Kilmany, a deputation was sent to hear him preach. It so happened that on the Sabbath selected by them for this purpose he was not at home, but at Bendochy, preaching a funeral sermon over the grave of an early friend of his, Mr. Honey. If they had found him in his own church, the impression produced would no doubt have been substantially the same ; but the occasion referred to was on various accounts an extraordinary one, and they were literally electrified.

“I have seen,” says one who was present, “many scenes, and I have heard many eloquent men, but this I have never seen equalled, or even imitated. It was not learning, it was not art ; it was the untaught and the un-

encumbered incantation of genius, the mightiest engine of which the world can boast."

The four citizens from Glasgow who were in the crowd that day went home resolved if possible to accomplish Chalmers's election.

But the task they had set to themselves was one of no ordinary difficulty. "We have had a very hard battle to fight," they wrote; "what with the Duke of Montrose, Sir Islay Campbell, the college interest, and the late and present provost against us, we have had our hands quite full, and had to put forth all our might."

Dr. Jones of Lady Glenorchy's, Edinburgh, after all was over, writes thus to Chalmers himself: "The battle, the great battle, has been fought and won. Heaven and earth and all the principalities and powers in high places have been moved,—from the great officers of State at St. James's and the Court of Aldermen in King Street, and the Crown lawyers in Edinburgh, down to the little female piets, who were taught to squall what they did not understand—'No fanatics! No Balfourites! Rationalists for ever!' No small stir, I'll assure you, has been in that city, and no such stir has been there since the days of John Knox, it is said, about the choice of a minister."

It was found that the vote stood thus: for Chalmers, 15; for Macfarlane, 10; for Maclean, 4.

"No sooner," says Dr. Jones, "had the news reached the town on the afternoon of Friday the 25th of November than all the town was in an uproar of joy,—Kirkmen, Burghers, Antiburghers, Independents, and Baptists, all joining in one shout of exultation! The news had little less effect, I assure you, in this city. Every one meets or runs to his friend, through a most heavy rain, to say,



‘Oh ! have you heard the good news ? Mr. Chalmers is elected to the Tron Kirk of Glasgow.’ ”

The cause of all this jubilation is not far to seek. Moderatism had long held undisputed possession of all the high places in the Church of Scotland, and the victory at Glasgow was hailed as a sign that the turn of the tide had come.

In the meantime Chalmers himself was sorely perplexed. The rumour of his possible removal produced among the people to whom he had been ministering for ten years a feeling of consternation. They sent him a petition earnestly entreating him to remain, and he was thrown again and again into successive floods of tenderness by renewed proofs of their affectionate regard. But he could not shut his eyes to the fact that the arguments for his going greatly preponderated, and after much anxious thought and prayer, he sent, on the 14th of December, his acceptance of the call which, without solicitation on his part, had been addressed to him.

The attitude of his mind is revealed in a very interesting way in the statement which he drew up of the *pros* and *cons* which he considered before he arrived at his final conclusion.

In these, it is very noticeable, the bent of his mind is all toward removal. His reasons for going are given without qualification ; his reasons for remaining have in each case appended to them what seems to him a more or less sufficient answer.

Among other things which weigh with him in favour of accepting the call, one is that his refusal *would be a severe blow “to the Christian party in Glasgow.”* He is encouraged also to go by the consideration that he might calculate on finding in a city more stimulus to exertion



and study, and "a warm Christian society to revive the deadness and barrenness of his own soul." Besides, he cannot help thinking of the advantage of being in the neighbourhood of a university, although he no sooner mentions the attraction than, recollecting the snares which had once met him in that direction, he breathes a prayer—"O my God, keep me from being tempted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

On the other hand, it could no doubt be said on behalf of Kilmany, that it afforded a pleasant sphere, the hearty support of a loving people, and undivided time for study. But then, as he argues with himself, "moving from place to place was the general practice of the first preachers;" "it was possible that his parish might even benefit by a change;" and with regard to the abundant leisure, "I have languished out many hours here for want of stimulus."

In short, he saw his way to go; but the wrench was a serious one, and more than twenty years after he was heard to say that there was more tearing of the heart-strings in leaving the valley of Kilmany than at leaving all his great parish in Glasgow.

Chalmers's first sermon in the metropolis of the west was preached some months before his own settlement there. It was delivered before the Society of the Sons of the Clergy; and as the public curiosity had been keenly awakened about him, a vast multitude assembled to hear, although the service was held on a week-day. The author of "Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk" happened to be present on the occasion, and in that shrewd and interesting work the author has described the preacher and the impression produced by him. "At first, no doubt," he writes, "his face is a coarse one; but a mysterious kind of meaning

breathes from every part of it. It is very pale, and the large half-closed eyelids have a certain drooping melancholy weight about them which interested me very much, I understood not why. The lips, too, are singularly pensive in their mode of falling down at the sides, although there is no want of richness and vigour in their central fulness of curve. The upper lip, from the nose downward, is separated by a very deep line, which gives a sort of becoming firmness of expression to all the lower part of the face. The eyes are light in colour, and have a strange dreamy heaviness that conveys any idea rather than that of dulness, but which contrasts in a wonderful manner with the dazzling watery gleam they exhibit when expanded in their sockets and illuminated into all their flame and fervour in some moment of entranced enthusiasm. But the shape of the forehead is, perhaps, the most singular part of the whole visage. It is, without exception, the most marked mathematical forehead I ever met with."

As to the sermon, the same observer writes: "I have heard many men deliver sermons far better arranged in regard to argument, and have heard very many deliver sermons far more uniform in elegance both of conception and of style, but most unquestionably I have never heard, either in England or Scotland or in any other country, any preacher whose eloquence is capable of producing an effect so strong and irresistible as his."

His induction to the Tron Church took place on Friday the 21st of July 1815, and on the following Sabbath he was introduced to his new charge by Sir Harry Moncreiff. Among those present on the occasion was Mr. Simeon of Cambridge.

"This, sir," Chalmers wrote, three months later, to an

old friend of his in the country—"this, sir, is a wonderful place, and I am half entertained and half provoked by some of the peculiarities of its people. The peculiarity which bears hardest upon me is the incessant demand they have, upon all occasions, for the personal attendance of the ministers. They must have four to every funeral, or they do not think it has been genteelly gone through; they must have one or more to all the committees of all the societies; they must fall in at every procession.....I gave in to all this at first, but I am beginning to keep a suspicious eye upon those repeated demands ever since I sat nearly an hour in grave deliberation with a number of others upon a subject connected with the property of a corporation, and that subject was a *gutter*, and the question was whether it should be bought and covered up, or let alone and left to lie open. I am gradually separating myself from all this trash, and long to establish it as a doctrine, that the life of a town minister should be what the life of a country minister might be; that is, a life of intellectual leisure, with the option of literary pursuits, and his entire time disposable to the purposes to which the apostles gave themselves wholly—that is, the ministry of the Word and prayer."

Deciding this great gutter question was not the most absurd business in which he was called upon to engage. Sitting on the affairs of the town hospital, a warm debate arose one day about the kind of soup which should be administered to the inmates. Some argued for pork broth, others for broth of oxhead. To settle this weighty point, a quantity of both articles was brought bodily into the board-room and subjected to the test of practical examination; and, after all, the conclusion come to was no more satisfactory than that at which Sir Rodger de

Coverley arrived—namely, that much might be said on both sides !

Chalmers found this sort of thing, as he told his friend, part of a system. The minister was associated with all the charities and most of the educational establishments in the city, and his time was so occupied with these that it was simply impossible for him to attend in anything like an effective way to his parochial duties.

One of the first things, then, to which he addressed himself was the getting rid of this incubus ; and although his object was not accomplished at once, nor without taking the matter to the pulpit and fulminating about it, he did in the end succeed in achieving, not his own emancipation only, but that also of many of his brethren, who had been acquiescing in the evil as if it were certainly inevitable.

“ Among the earliest visits made through the families ” [of his parish], said he, speaking some years afterwards as a witness about pauperism before the House of Commons, “ I was very much surprised at the unexpected cordiality of my welcome, the people thronging about me, and requesting me to enter their houses. I remember I could scarcely make my way to the bottom of a close in the Saltmarket, I was so exceedingly thronged by the people. But I soon perceived that this was in consequence of my imagined influence in the distribution of charities ; and I certainly did feel a great recoil, for it was so different from the principle upon which I had been received with cordiality in my country parish, where the topic of their temporal necessities was scarcely ever mentioned. I therefore resolved to dis sever myself from the administration of these charities altogether. I soon made the people understand that I only dealt in one article, that of Christian

instruction, and that if they chose to receive me upon this footing I should be glad to visit them occasionally. I can vouch for it that the cordiality of the people was not only enhanced but very much refined in principle after this became the general understanding. Of the ten thousand entries which I have made at different times into the houses of the poor in Glasgow, I cannot recollect but half-a-dozen instances in which I was not received with welcome."

So far good. He was able after this arrangement to move through the Saltmarket without being thought of chiefly as a charity commissioner. But then there was his own house, nominally his castle. How was he to defend himself there against the intrusion of a somewhat higher order of seekers, who believed, and had good reason to believe, that secular influence of an important kind lay in the hands of the clergy? He saw no way of meeting this side of the case but by giving his mind upon it in public. Accordingly he preached upon it, and in doing so spoke of the affliction under which he groaned in a way which (in spite of the day and place) must have seemed half humorous, half pathetic.

"How," he asked, "shall a minister be able to extricate himself from the besetting inconveniences of such an arrangement as gives to the whole population of a neighbourhood a constant and ever-moving tendency toward his house? The patronage with which, I think, it is his heavy misfortune to be encumbered, gives him a share in the disposal of innumerable vacancies, and each vacancy gives rise to innumerable candidates, and each candidate is sure to strengthen his chance of success by stirring up a whole round of acquaintances, who, in the various forms of written and of personal entreaty, discharge their wishes

on the minister in the shape of innumerable applications. It is fair to observe, however, that the turmoil of all this electioneering has its times and its seasons. It does not keep by one in the form of a steady monsoon. It comes upon him more in the resemblance of a hurricane; and, like the hurricanes of the atmosphere, it has its months of violence and its intervals of periodical cessation. I shall only say that when it does come, the power of contemplation takes to itself wings and flees away."

But this was not the only kind of interruption to which he was exposed. In the autumn of 1818 his family was in the country, and he was left in Glasgow to keep house alone. During that period he showed no disposition whatever to shut himself up from his kind. On the contrary, his hospitality was unbounded. Whether Mrs. Chalmers approved of it or not, the number of people to whom he offered bed and breakfast was portentous. But he liked to keep his time and his *ménage* in his own hands; and the mixture of vexation and kindness which appears in the following extract from a letter to his wife is highly amusing:—

"*Wednesday*.—Wrote for the General Session. I had not sat long when in came Miss —, with all the plenitude of some mighty doing, which turned out neither more nor less than a plum-jelly operation, which, greatly in opposition to my wishes, she brought upon me whether I would or not. Janet had spoken to me some days before, when I told her that you had given no directions about it, and that I did not want it. Janet now tells me that she told Miss — that you had given no orders about it, but did not like to tell her that I did not want it. I told her so myself, however; but it seems the materials were all bought and the operations begun; and Miss —, upon

feeling corrected by my remark, spoke so as to fill me with a kind of remorse at my severity. So I went out on a round of visitation, and *took her mother in my way*. Called also on Mr. Turpie; and on coming back at four found the table covered for me and Miss ——. She left me about six. *The operation is completed!*"

His object, as he had indicated, was to assimilate the life of a town minister to that of a minister in the country. That he did not succeed perfectly needs not be said. Complete success was impossible. The conditions of the two states are too radically different. Notwithstanding, this is undoubtedly true, that never before had so near an approach been made to the ideal which he had conceived of. And when he had so far made good his point, he taught a lesson which has never since been forgotten. It is now by no means an uncommon thing to find city ministers whose pastoral superintendence of their flocks is as thorough as was his own in the rural parish of Kilmany.

"Till Dr. Chalmers came to Glasgow," says Mr. David Stow, "parochial Christian influence was a mere name; it was not systematic, it was not understood; there was not the machinery for the moral elevation of a town population. The people were let alone. Some of the elders of the Tron Church were excellent men; but their chief duty was to stand at the plate, receive the free-will offerings of the congregation as they entered, and distribute them to the poor by a monthly allowance. Their spiritual duties were small, and almost exclusively confined to a few of the sick."

Chalmers set out with the resolution to visit every family in his parish. As there were ten thousand people in it, this implied an immense enterprise, and the visitation he contemplated could not but be very slight.



As he was toiling one day up one of the long stairs of the Saltmarket, he suddenly turned to the elder who was accompanying him and asked what he was thinking about. The elder had been too much occupied with the burden of the ascent to have been thinking of anything in particular, and he said so. But this did not satisfy his minister, who, with a humorous twinkle in his eye, accused him of concealing the nature of his reflections. "I know quite well," he said, "that if you were to speak your mind, you would say that we are putting the butter very thinly on the bread."

In these visits he did not even pray. If he had done so in one case he must have done so in all, and the work he had undertaken would not have been accomplished for years. And yet, there were occasions when a word fitly spoken left, in all probability, impressions which were never afterwards effaced.

"Passing through a house in which he saw an old man reclining, he stepped aside, bent over him, lifted up his right hand, and said simply, but with emphatic solemnity, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Entering another house, in which was an old bedridden woman, of whom he had been told beforehand that, of a hard and severe character herself, she cherished the darkest and most severe conceptions of the Deity, he went up hastily to her bedside, and fixing her attention by the very vehemence of his utterance, he said, 'Now, I have just come to tell you that God Almighty has no ill will at you: I want you to understand that he has a perfect good will to you;'—leaving her more startled, perhaps more convinced, than she would have been by any lengthened argument."

It must not be supposed, however, that, because these



visits were so hasty, he left any district without giving to all the people in it an opportunity of hearing the gospel from his lips.

The method he followed is indicated in his diary :—  
“ Along with Mr. C——, had another visitation. Addressed two rooms full of people at a door which opened to each of them. I have a great satisfaction in this part of my duty.”—“ Went through Norris Land. Drank a hurried tea in the parish with Mr. Ure, and went back to Norris Land at eight, where I held forth to a motley assemblage of a hundred people at least. I had great freedom and satisfaction in this work ; and, after it was over, received many polite attentions from the genteeler of the auditory.”—“ Went through about two hundred and thirty people, and drank tea at Mr. Brown’s ; then, at eight, delivered an address, in one of the houses, to an assemblage consisting of eighty-five people. Have great comfort in this work.”

At the time these meetings were held he was in the height of his popularity, and every Sabbath-day his church (holding fourteen hundred people) was thronged by eager and admiring multitudes ; yet, we may safely say, he had more “ comfort ” in the unpretending services which he held in the Closes than he had in the great congregations which assembled in the Tron.

One thing, among many, which the visitations revealed, was the lamentable amount of ignorance which prevailed among the young. To meet this evil, he instituted a number of Sabbath schools ; and, in order that these might be as effective as possible, he located them in distinctly defined districts, making these districts in no case over large, and confiding the oversight of them to competent agents. His own enthusiasm soon infected others ; and among the

elders and young people of his congregation he easily found as many willing workers as he could employ. Then the parochial system, which he had seen in such effective operation in the country, was made to embrace, as far as could be at the time, one great and necessitous parish in the city.

While all this was going on, very much out of the sight of the world, the Tron Church was being made, Sabbath after Sabbath, a theatre for the display of an eloquence which many believed to be unprecedented; and the country had now been thoroughly wakened up to realize that a pulpit orator had appeared of the highest order.

"I know not what it is," wrote Lord Jeffrey, the great critic of the time, "but there is something remarkable about that man. It reminds me more of what one reads of as the effect of the eloquence of Demosthenes than anything I ever saw."

At the invitation of the London Missionary Society, Chalmers had gone up to the metropolis in May 1817, to preach an anniversary sermon, and there the world had literally run after him. What helped to that was the publication previously of "The Astronomical Discourses." These discourses, delivered on week days to crowds in Glasgow, produced an extraordinary impression on those who heard them; and, when they were printed, they became the rage all over the country. "They were," says Hazlitt, who was himself carried away with the general rush—"they were the darlings of watering-places, were laid in the windows of inns, and were to be met with in all places of public resort." Coming out about the same time as one of Scott's novels, they ran a neck and neck race with it in the public estimation—nine editions and twenty thousand copies being exhausted within the year.

On this wave of popularity he had gone to London, and met there with something like an ovation. Wherever he preached—in Surrey Chapel, in London Wall, in Swallow Street—the multitudes who went to hear him were immense, and included many of the most notable men of the day.

“All the world,” wrote Mr. Wilberforce, “is wild about Dr. Chalmers. He seems truly pious, simple, unassuming. *Sunday, 25th.*—Off early, with Canning, Huskisson, and Lord Binning, to the Scotch Church, London Wall, to hear Dr. Chalmers. Vast Crowds. Bobus Smith, Lords Elgin, Harrowby, &c. I was surprised to see how greatly Canning was affected; at times he was quite melted to tears. The passage which most affected him was at the close of the discourse. He is reported to have said, that although at first he felt uneasy, in consequence of Chalmers’s manner and accent, yet that he had never been so arrested by any oratory. ‘The tartan,’ so runs the speech attributed to him, ‘beats us all.’”

“The attention which your sermons have excited,” wrote Robert Hall to him, “is probably unequalled in modern literature; and it must be a delightful reflection that you are advancing the cause of religion in innumerable multitudes of your fellow-creatures whose faces you will never behold till the last day. My ardent prayer is, that talents so rich in splendour, and piety so fervent, may long be continued to be faithfully and assiduously devoted to the service of God and of your generation.”

Returning to Glasgow after all this, his popularity became, of course, greater than ever. All Scotland experienced a sensible exultation that one whose very accent at once proclaimed his nationality, was recognized as a man of matchless eloquence by the greatest preachers and statesmen of the time.

But he himself was not carried away with all the applause. If, indeed, it had not gratified him, he would not have been human. Occasionally there appear, even in his journal, confessions which show that he was not altogether unconscious of the stirrings of vanity. But in his sober moods, and these were most habitual, the popularity he met with was rather a burden to him than otherwise.

In one place he speaks with a sigh of "a most oppressive multitude." At another time he, in good set terms, almost denounces the kind of fuss and fury of which he was so constantly the object.

"There is," says he, "a high and far-sounding popularity which is a most worthless article, felt by all who have it most to be greatly more oppressive than gratifying; a popularity of stare, and pressure, and animal heat, and a whole tribe of other annoyances which it brings around the person of its unfortunate victim; a popularity which, with its head among storms, and its feet on the treacherous quicksands, has nothing to lull the agonies of its tottering existence but the hosannas of a drivelling generation."

One evening Dr. Wardlaw heard Chalmers preach in Glasgow. The sermon had been advertised, and the rush to hear him was tremendous. At the close, Wardlaw joined him in the vestry, and the two friends, who lived near each other, walked homeward together.

"On the way home," says Dr. Wardlaw, "he expressed, in his pithy manner, his great annoyance at such crowds. 'I preached the same sermon,' said he, 'in the morning; and for the very purpose of preventing the oppressive annoyance of such a densely-crowded place, I intimated that I should preach it again in the evening.' And with

most ingenuous guilelessness he added, 'Have *you* ever tried that plan?' I did not smile—I laughed outright. 'No, no,' I replied, 'my good friend; there are but very few of us that are under the necessity of having recourse to the use of means for getting a thin audience.' He enjoyed the joke, and he felt, though he modestly disowned, the compliment."

How, amid the manifold distractions which he could not possibly avoid, Chalmers was able to maintain his high level of pulpit preparation, and even to write elaborate articles for reviews (it is to this period that his first paper on Pauperism in the *Edinburgh* belongs), is explained in his journals. He had an extraordinary power of abstraction; so that while he was moving about from place to place—in wayside inns, or when spending parts of days in the houses of friends—he could withdraw into himself at any moment, and give himself up to "severe composition." Some of his Astronomical Discourses were written partly in this disjointed way, while the common impression at the time was that he was burning over them the midnight oil. The fact was that he did not burn much midnight oil at any time. Rather, like many of the men who have done most, he was an early riser, and between six and nine, even on winter mornings, he had already accomplished much of the work which in other cases would at the latter hour be only just beginning.

But what specially draws the heart to him all through this period is his unaffected piety and warm-heartedness. His account of his first visit to Kilmany, after he had left it for Glasgow, is most touching.

"The first parish hamlet I landed at," he writes, "was at the back of Mountquhannie, where I turned the population out, and went through a great deal of *speering* and

hand-shaking. I did the same among all the houses immediately around Mountquhannie. One of my female scholars wept aloud, and I was much moved myself."

"My whole sensations in this place," he goes on to tell, "are mixed up with a painful and melancholy tenderness. I have made a great sacrifice of personal comfort by going to Glasgow; and all that I read about the poor and the riots, and the calling upon ministers to exert themselves, adds to the repulsion I feel toward that city."

"Robin Dewar (the carrier)," he adds, "came from Cupar with a letter to me. I had a sentimental interview with him at the kitchen portico."

It was sometimes said that Chalmers had rather a habit of "taking fancies" to people; that his bright and kindly imagination was easily moved to throw around such objects of special interest more light than justly belonged to them. Whether that was so or not, it is certain that he was capable of forming most romantic attachments—his love for Mr. James Anderson of Dundee and Mr. Thomas Smith of Glasgow being truly wonderful. In this depth and tenderness of his affections lay the secret of a great part of his power over men. It was always felt that he was no mere logician, forcing convictions by his reasonings, but a loving-hearted man, influencing others by the very fulness of his *humanity*.

Above all, his intercourse with God was most beautifully childlike. Here he is in March 1818 lamenting his unspirituality:—

"6th. Have not yet attained such a walk with God, that in looking to the day that is gone I can see anything like the general complexion of godliness.

"7th. Cannot yet speak to my walk with God. Will a quiet confidence in Christ not bring this about?

"*8th.* Not yet. O my God, help me! Let me do what is obviously right, and God will bless me with the frame and the manifestation I long after.

"*9th.* Not yet! Trust that I am finding my way to Christ as the Lord my strength.

"*18th.* Not yet! But, I trust, better."

His father died four months later. Writing on the day of his funeral, he says: "He died in peace, and, I am confident, is now in glory. He was a veteran Christian, who had long walked in the good old way of justification by the righteousness of Christ, and sanctification by the Spirit which is at His giving."

And this testimony to his father's piety, and the basis of it, leads him on to reiterate with increased clearness and emphasis his view of the way of salvation:—

"I feel that the righteousness of Christ, unmixed with baser materials, untempered with strange mortar, unviolated by human pretensions of any sort, is the solid resting-place on which a man is to lay his acceptance before God, and that there is no other; that to attempt a composition between grace and works is to spoil both, and is to deal a blow both at the character of God and to the cause of practical holiness. This is my firm conviction; but I trust you understand that it may be a firm conviction without being a bright and rapture-giving perception. I know that it should enrapture me—that it should throw me into the transports of gratitude—that it should make me feel as a man in all the triumphs of confident anticipation. But I have occasional visitations of darkness and dulness and spiritual lethargy, and then, like Rutherford, I would like to believe in the dark—to keep my hold in the midst of all my darkness and all my misgivings—to humble myself because of my cold insensibility, but still



to trust determinedly—to trust in the name and righteousness of my Lord.”

“I think,” he adds, “that holiness is looked upon by some evangelical writers in rather a lame and inadequate point of view. They value it chiefly as an evidence of justifying faith. They are right in saying that it gives no title to God’s favour ; but they are wrong in saying that its chief use is to ascertain that title, or to make that title clear to him who possesses it. It is, in fact, chiefly valuable *on its own* account. It forms part, and an effective part of salvation. It may be considered our entrance upon heaven. Christ came to give us a justifying righteousness, and he also came to make us holy ; not chiefly for the purpose of evidencing here our possession of a justifying righteousness—not for so temporary an object as this—but for the purpose of forming and fitting us for a blessed eternity.”

This was the doctrine which he preached in the Tron ; and how much lasting fruit there came of it, the Day will declare.



## CHAPTER V.

### ST. JOHN'S.



THE magistrates of Glasgow did not at all agree with Chalmers as to the spiritually necessitous state of the city. He—painting with the big brush which he was in the habit of using—said that *twenty* more churches were needed, and they thought such a statement simply ridiculous. But they went with him so far. They admitted that *some* more church accommodation was required; and to show that they held to this conviction honestly, they built *St. John's*. More than that—on the 5th of June 1818 they offered the incumbency of it to the minister of *the Tron*.

What inducement was there for Chalmers to move from one church to another in the same place? *St. John's* was larger than the *Tron*; it was situated in a locality mainly inhabited by the working-classes; and there was, to begin with, no congregation. The principal inducement was this: that in the older parishes the Establishment was so hampered by old laws and regulations, that he had no freedom to do a great many things which he thought to be necessary in the interest of religion, while in the new parish which he was invited to occupy he was expressly promised liberty to do very much as he liked.

Tempted by this promise, he accepted the appointment;

and when the building was finished, and everything else satisfactorily arranged, he was introduced to his new charge on the 26th of August 1819, by Dr. Andrew Thomson.

The sittings were let first to such residents within the parish as wished for them ; next, to any who desired to follow him from the Tron ; and, finally, to all and sundry who made application. At the close of this process it was not found that any vacant space remained. The congregation was found without difficulty.

But the district had to be operated on, and to this work he addressed himself with all the enthusiasm of one who believed that he was now about to exhibit the practicability of plans which it would be for the advantage of the nation to apply everywhere.

He had long been thoroughly convinced that pauperism - could never be effectually met by means of a poor law, or a system of legal assessment. He held that under such a system the independence of the people was injuriously affected, and charity often and grossly abused. He was satisfied that in large towns, as well as in small rural parishes, all that needed to be done could be done better, more cheaply and more efficiently, by the exercise of a wise Christian benevolence ; and one of the things he had most at heart in undertaking the oversight of St. John's was to prove the truth of his theories by showing them in practical operation.

The experiment which he proposed to make was on a large scale. There were ten thousand people in the parish, and the cost of its pauperism had hitherto been £1400 a year. Nevertheless, he offered to relinquish all claim on the fund raised by assessments, and to undertake to support the poor out of the voluntary contributions received at the church door. These contributions were considerable, but

they did not amount to anything like the sum which has been named ; and that the scheme succeeded (as it did conspicuously) was due entirely to the excellent management which husbanded the resources of the parish, and prevented any of them from running to worse than waste.

How this was done can be explained in a sentence. The parish was divided into districts. Each of these was placed under the charge of an elder and a deacon. The really poor in it were ascertained by means of personal visitation. And while the vicious were utterly discountenanced, and work was provided as far as possible for those who were willing to live by their own industry, no one was suffered to remain in a state of want who was a genuine object of charity.

At first it was supposed by the *ne'er-do-wells* that better days had dawned upon them ; that the doles made to such as themselves would be more generous and indiscriminating than ever. But they soon found out their mistake. "The scrutiny to which each case was subjected was patiently, minutely, and even searchingly conducted. It was soon perceived that the very last thing which a deacon would allow was that any family in the parish should sink into the degraded condition of being chargeable on the parish funds. The drunken were told to give up their drunkenness, and that until they did so their case would not even be considered ; the idle were told to set instantly to work, and if they complained that work could not be gotten, by kindly application to employers they were helped to obtain it ; the improvident were warned that if with such resources of income as they had or might have they chose to squander and bring themselves to want, they must just bear the misery of their own procuring."

The machinery set agoing was thus not used simply to

relieve destitution. It was made a powerful moral force for its prevention and cure. And the results which followed, although they were quite what Chalmers himself anticipated, took everybody else by surprise. What could formerly be accomplished—and that imperfectly—at an outlay of £1400 a year was now done very much more satisfactorily for £280 a year. The church-door collections in this way yielded a superabundant supply of means, and by universal consent £500 of the overplus was, after a time, devoted to endowing a school.

Nor could it be said that the success of the scheme was due to the extraordinary personal popularity of Chalmers. The same system was continued in the locality after he had left it, and here is what could be said about it by his successor, Dr. Macfarlan,—

“The experiment of sixteen months, during which I was minister of St. John's, confirmed the favourable opinion which I previously entertained of the system: it worked well in all respects. With an income from collections not much exceeding £300 we kept down the pauperism of a parish containing a population of ten thousand; and I know from actual observation that the poor were in better condition, and, excepting the worthless and profligate who applied for and were refused assistance, were more contented and happy than the poor in the other parishes of Scotland.”

It is a pity that so Christian a scheme could not have been permanently sustained, even in one city parish. But it had always been viewed with hostility by various parties, and after eighteen years it was given up; and now, in the divided state of Scotland, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to revive it. What greatly grieved Chalmers, however, was that its abandonment was generally spoken

of as the result of failure. To this inference he objected strongly. His faith in the system continued unshaken to the last, and although, like the rest of us, he had to acquiesce in the inevitable, he was never reconciled to a legal poor law.

The sustenance of the poor, however, was but one of the objects which specially interested him in St. John's. When he began to visit in the Tron he had found gross ignorance prevailing among the young, and he had tried to meet the evil by the institution of Sabbath schools. But this expedient did not go deep enough to meet the case, and he addressed himself to the establishment of schools in which the poor children of the parish might get a good Christian education during the week.

He took the first step in this direction within a month of his settlement; when, calling together a few members of his new congregation, he submitted to them this resolution: "That there should, in the first instance, and as soon as possible, be raised by subscription a sum of money deemed adequate to the erection of one fabric, to include two school-houses and two teachers' houses; which, when completed, shall in all time thereafter be exclusively occupied for the use and benefit of the parish of St. John's."

The proposal was cordially agreed to. Chalmers set an example of liberality by subscribing £100. Within a week or two a sum of £1200 was raised. In July 1820 the building was ready for occupation. And thus an enterprise was launched from which incalculable good has followed. For not merely was this first school succeeded by others in St. John's, but the idea was taken up elsewhere, and a great impulse was given to the cause of education all over the country. His interest in the schools was immense. He was almost a daily visitor to one or

other of them. And when strangers of importance came to see him—as was frequently the case—one of the lions which he invariably took them to view was the system of educational establishments which he had been enabled to set agoing. Before he left Glasgow, he could point to over seven hundred children who were receiving first-rate instruction through his instrumentality.

During two of the years of his St. John's incumbency he was assisted in all his labours by EDWARD IRVING. Irving had not, to begin with, found any suitable niche for himself. He was not, in the ordinary sense, a popular preacher, and there was no patron with whom he had any influence. Discouraged by the aspect of things, he had almost come to the conclusion of expatriating himself, when his gifts happily came to be recognized by the two most famous Scottish churchmen of the time. Dr. Andrew Thomson one day asked him to preach in St. George's, and told him that he would have among his hearers Dr. Chalmers of Glasgow. The consequence was that he was invited to St. John's; and a very highly favoured people indeed were they who were permitted to sit at the feet of two such men, and hear from the one lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, and from the other lectures on St. Luke.

The two "sorted" together admirably. Here, for example, is a fine sketch:—

"Entering the school-room in Macfarlane Street one Monday forenoon, he said to Mr. Aitken [the teacher]: 'My family are at Kirkcaldy; as I wish to have an hour's easy chat with you and Mr. Macgregor [another teacher], will you just come up at three o'clock and have a steak with Mr. Irving and myself in the vestry?' In company with Mr. Irving, he called as the schools were dismissing,

and the two ministers and the two teachers proceeded to the vestry. The table was set; and John Graham, the beadle, officiated as waiter. Tales of the school and out of the school followed close upon each other. 'I am afraid,' said Dr. Chalmers to one of the teachers, 'that your labour is not of the right sort—too exhausting.' Mr. Aitken mentioned that Dr. Bell from India had called the previous day between sermons desiring to see the classrooms. 'I had a call from him,' said Dr. Chalmers, 'this morning. I was lying awake in my old woman's room [while his family was away he was living in very humble lodgings in the heart of his parish], cogitating whether I should get up or not, when I heard a heavy step in the kitchen; and the door opening, and the speaker entering, a rough voice exclaimed, "Can this be the chamber of the great Dr. Chalmers?"'—'And what did you say?' inquired Mr. Irving, who enjoyed exceedingly the ridiculousness of the question. With a quiet smile and inimitable archness, accompanied by frequent shutting of his eyelids—'I even told him,' said Dr. Chalmers, 'that it was, and invited him to stay to breakfast with me. I knew that Mr. Collins was to be out with a proof, and was glad to think that the discussion between the merits of his school system and the Scottish, which I knew was soon to follow, would be supported by one who I suspected was more than a match for him.'—'Well,' said Mr. Irving, 'and how did it turn up?'—'Mr. Collins arrived as I expected, and to it they set tooth and nail.'—'And the result?'—'Collins was too many for him.' The hour filled up with such pleasant talk, the two teachers returned to their school-rooms, and the two ministers to their round among their parishioners."

Again :—"At an agency tea-party, Mr. Irving, who



had just returned from a tour in Ireland, related some amusing particulars of his perambulations through the liberties of Dublin. I entered, said he, a miserable cabin, in which an old woman was smoking a pipe by the fire. Seeing three coarse portraits on the wall, I asked her who they were. 'Sure, that's St. Paul on the right.'—'And this?'—'An' sure isn't that St. Peter.'—'And he in the centre?'—'And don't you know Pat Donolly, the bruiser?—sure everybody knows him!'"

During this period of his life his pastoral labours were not merely abundant, but overwhelming.

"I spend," he wrote to his wife, "four days a week visiting the people, in company with the agents of the various districts over which I expatiate. I last week overtook between seven hundred and eight hundred people, and have great pleasure in the movement. This I am generally done with in the forenoon, and then dine either at the vestry or in a friend's house. In addition to this I have had an agency tea every night except yesternight; and in a few evenings more I expect to overtake the whole agency of my parish. At nine I go out to family worship in some house belonging to the district of my present residence, where I assemble the people of the land or close vicinity; and expect, ere I quit my present quarters, to overtake in this way the whole of that district. I furthermore have an address every Friday night to the people of my vicinity, in the Calton Lancasterian School-room; and a weekly address will be necessary for each of the four weeks, in St. John's Church, to the people whom I have gone over in regular visitation. Add to all this the missionary monthly meeting held yesternight, and you will find that, without one particle of study, I am in full occupation. I study only on Fridays and Saturdays."



All this could not possibly last. He had experiments to make and theories to prove in St. John's; and that, no doubt, reconciled him for the time to a manner of life which he could not have continued to pursue without the sacrifice of all other interests. But even while thus throwing himself into parochial work with an abandonment which must have astonished all who witnessed it, he was cherishing the hope that he might yet be free to follow another line of things. "My desire," he was writing, "is to give the remainder of my days to intellectual rather than to bodily labour. An excess of the latter I find to be very hurtful, and should God uphold me in strength and in the exercise of my faculties, I contemplate a far more deliberate process of authorship than I have ever yet had leisure for."

Various opportunities offered for his removal to other and less laborious spheres, but they were either unsuitable in themselves, or they came at times which were unseasonable. At last, however, an opening occurred which had too many attractions to be refused. On the 18th of January 1823 he was elected Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews, and without any hesitation he accepted the appointment.

Of course his proposed departure from Glasgow caused a *furor* of disappointment, and even of irritation; but his reasons for agreeing to the change were really unanswerable.

"My first," said he, "is a reason of necessity, and is founded on the imperative condition of my health. I should like to unite the labour of preparation for the pulpit with the labour of household ministrations in the parish; this is a union which I have made many attempts to realize, and I now find myself to be altogether unequal

to it: this mortifying experience has grown upon me for a good many months, but never did it become so distinct and decisive until the present winter. My very last attempt at exertion out of doors has been followed up by several weeks of utter incapacity for fixed thought. I find it impossible any longer to acquit myself both of the personal and mental fatigue of my present office; and when under an oppressive sense of this, a vacant professorship came to my door, I entertained it as an opening in providence, and have resolved to follow it."

In a word, he had overworked himself, and with the longing of one perishing of thirst for water, he thought almost with rapture of "the unbounded leisure and liberty of a summer vacation."

On the 9th of November 1823, when he was just forty-three years of age, he preached his farewell sermon. "Applications for admission had for several weeks been pouring in with distressing profusion upon those who had seats in the church. To many individuals of rank and consideration tickets were issued entitling them to a place on the pulpit stair or in the vacant area around the precentor's desk.....Before the doors were opened, Macfarlane Street, Queen Street, and Campbell Street were filled with excited groups waiting eagerly for admission. At last the main entrance was thrown open, the gathered crowd converged upon it, and the conflict commenced. For a brief season the efforts of the door-keepers and their allies were successful; the assailants, however, multiplied so rapidly, and the mass accumulated behind drove on those before them with such impetuosity, that the well-guarded entrance was forced.....Into a church seated for about seventeen hundred nearly double that number was packed." And it was to this enormous crowd that his

last words were spoken from the pulpit he had for four busy years been filling.

A dinner followed on the Tuesday succeeding the discourse on the Sabbath. Three hundred and forty gentlemen sat down to it, the largest party of the sort which had ever assembled for a like purpose in the city. Nor was the number of friends who thus collected to do him honour the most notable feature in the gathering. What made it more remarkable was the varied complexion of the guests. "Whig and Tory, clergyman and layman, churchmen and dissenters, all joined in friendly concert to bestow upon him this parting memorial of their regard."

And so he left Glasgow amid the acclamations and regrets of multitudes who had seen the noble work he had performed, and who knew that their city would be permanently the better of his having lived so long among them.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ST. ANDREWS.



It was very natural that Chalmers should regard his translation to St. Andrews with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction. To fill a chair in its ancient university had been at one time the ambition of his life ; and although for a season he had been weaned, as he believed, from all desire of academic distinction, the old love revived when he came to feel that the burden of such a ministry as he had undertaken in Glasgow was too much for him, and realized that he might serve the cause of Christ quite as effectively through a professorship as through the pulpit.

He was not indeed to be engaged directly in the teaching of religion ; but, as he said, when explaining to the workers in St. John's his reasons for accepting the offer made to him, the subject he was to have in hand had so close a connection with divinity that it might well be called its handmaid.

“Moral philosophy,” he remarked, “is not theology, but it stands at the entrance of it, and so of all human sciences is the most capable of being turned into an instrument either for guiding right or for most grievously perverting the minds of those who are to be the religious teachers of the age.”

He did not feel, therefore, that he was diverging from the path in which he had of late been travelling, or was forgetting what was now the great and absorbing purpose of his life, when from his work of evangelization in the wynds of Glasgow he betook himself to a college class-room and joined with others in preparing young men for the ministry.

And being satisfied on this point, he was able to "expatiate," to use a favourite expression of his, with almost boyish rapture, over the bright and peaceful prospect which seemed now opening up before him.

"I never thought," he said in his inaugural address—"I never thought that on this side of time I should have been permitted to wander in arbours so desirable, and that thus embowered among my most delicious recollections, I should have realized in living and actual history the imagery of other days; that the play-fellows of my youth should thus become the associates of my manhood; and that the light-hearted companions of a season that has long passed away should, by the movements of a mysterious but, I trust, kind Providence, stand side by side as colleagues in the work of presiding over the studies of another generation."

He entered on the duties of his professorship with very little formal preparation. Coming right out of the heart of his parochial work in Glasgow, he had found no time to carry almost any completed material in his hand, and all the session through he was living literally from hand to mouth. But his subject was, in many of its aspects, quite familiar to him; and the manner in which he treated it was so different from what the university had been accustomed to that his class-room became oftentimes the scene of just such excitement as had been so frequently exhibited in churches or elsewhere by popular assemblies.

All the difference which appeared was this, that the enthusiasm awakened was expressed more demonstratively. In places of worship the stir he caused by his bursts of eloquence was restrained. In St. Andrews, the students would not be suppressed, and loud and often obstreperous ✓ applause followed the delivery of many portions of his lectures.

The appointment, in short, was admitted by all to be a great success; and even those who (sympathizing strongly in his missionary work) had most doubted about the propriety of such a man leaving the pulpit for a chair, began to see how, by directing as he was doing one of the tributary streams which helped to form the main current of the ministry, he was performing services which were likely to tell, not on one locality only, but on all the Church.

What did much to satisfy interested onlookers on that point was his method of teaching. He had no sooner undertaken his new office than he became persuaded that the subject hitherto had not been receiving justice. Less and more had been made of it than seemed to him to be either legitimate or wise. On the one hand, it had been the custom to treat it as if it were "mental" and not "moral" philosophy at all; or, at least, so much time was given to the discussion of the purely metaphysical difficulties of the science that little remained over for the exposition of what properly belonged to it. How this came about had a natural enough explanation. "The writings of Hume, in which the very foundation of morals was threatened by a purely metaphysical scepticism, had drawn after him, into a region which was not properly their own, the professors of moral science in Scotland. Metaphysics and moral science had become so allied and interwoven that it was imagined the one could not be

rightly discussed without a preceding and enlarged treatment of the other."

But there was a worse evil even than that. Chalmers found that there had existed before him a most unreasonably fastidious dread of trenching on the domain of natural theology, and still more of so much as remotely hinting that there was such a thing as Christianity. He himself was very careful to tell his students that the science of which he was the teacher was incapable of explaining everything. It suggested doubts which it could not solve. And nothing seemed to him more rational than to say that there was such a thing as a supernatural revelation, through which, possibly, some further information might be derived. He did not, of course, consider it his business to expound that revelation,—that duty had been committed to others,—but he held that it would have been most unphilosophical on his part not to mention a source of illumination from which a higher light might conceivably be received. And to show the propriety of this position, he was accustomed to use the following illustration:—

"If," said he, "natural philosophy were divided into two professorships, one of which related to the whole of terrestrial physics, and to that portion of celestial physics which is accessible to the unassisted observation of man, and the other of which related to that department of celestial physics the informations of which are brought home by the telescope; then if the professor of the former were to make no allusion either to the power of that instrument by which these further informations were brought home, or at least to make no general allusion to the magnitude and importance of the informations themselves, although he did not enter into a detail of them, he would be doing a most grievous injustice to the noble science of astronomy.

And in like manner I feel that I should be doing the utmost injustice to what may be considered as the science of celestial ethics, if I were to make no reference to that department of it which is beyond the ken of the natural powers, but within the ken of the Christian revelation."

He thus held that there had been at once an undue excess and an undue limitation in the teaching of his subject; and, striking out for himself, as usual, an independent path, he made his chair what, no doubt, it was intended originally to be,—a direct stepping-stone to the study of theology. Viewing it, indeed, so distinctly in this light, he was strongly convinced that its place behoved to be changed in the curriculum. In all our Scotch universities natural philosophy comes last in the undergraduate course. He would have had that subject brought on earlier, and moral philosophy made the subject last dealt with by the students before entering the Divinity Hall.

In regard to his method, he treated moral philosophy as strictly "the philosophy of duty;" and, in discussing that, he viewed his subject in two connections. The first part of his course was devoted to showing what are the ethical relations of man and man. In the second he took a higher flight and dealt with the moralities which connect heaven and earth. It was, of course, under this last head that he felt himself impelled to touch upon revelation. The moralities with which we have to do have not been fully enumerated if no account is taken of an invisible Being to whom we owe obedience. *Who he is*, is a question which Chalmers regarded as so far within his sphere, and he gave some lectures upon it; but it was impossible, in discussing it, not to see that the light is insufficient which Nature supplies, and hence he ended by making direct,



though not detailed, allusion to that spiritual telescope by whose means alone any certain information could be derived of things unseen.

When his second session came round, Chalmers was, of course, still better prepared to meet and satisfy the expectations which had been formed regarding him ; and his course this year has often been spoken of since as a peculiarly brilliant one. Students gathered to St. Andrews from all the other Scottish universities, and even from England and Ireland. The attendance on the moral philosophy class became more than doubled. Never had so large or intelligent an audience been collected within the college walls ; and teacher and scholars alike felt the stimulus of the scene. Many were the impassioned utterances to which the professor was moved to give expression, and all his efforts were vain to keep his hearers from showing how thoroughly they appreciated these. The practice of “ruffing,” it would seem, had only been recently introduced. It had appeared, more or less, in all the universities. Chalmers, as we can well believe, was afflicted with it more than most. And as he had of old consulted Dr. Wardlaw about the best means of keeping down a crowd, so now he took counsel with a professor of mathematics on the subject of how best to put an end to what he called the system of “pedestrian approbation.” “It is,” he told his students almost ruefully, “a new and somewhat perplexing phenomenon in the seats of learning ; but whatever diversity of taste or of opinion may obtain as to the right treatment of it, my friend and I agreed in one thing,—that if any response is to come back upon the professor for the effusions poured forth by him, it is far better that it should come from the *heads* than from the *heels* of the rising generation !” It may fairly be doubted whether such a

remonstrance could have had any other effect than that of increasing the evil.

Laboriously and conscientiously as Chalmers performed all the duties of his office, he did not find in it full scope for all his energies ; and partly, no doubt, on that account, and partly because he had always felt a keen interest in the subject, he opened a supplementary class for political economy. In this class Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" was used as a text-book. Upon that and his lectures careful catechetical instruction was given. And not the least of the benefits which he conferred upon the young men who came under his influence at St. Andrews was the training which they received from him as members of the body politic.

In settling down, however, in the city with which he had so many pleasant associations, there was one thing which he seems to have rather forgotten. *He* was not the same as he had been when, as the minister of Kilmany, he had asserted his right to teach in defiance of the university. But although he had changed, St. Andrews had not. It was, in religious matters, as Moderate as ever ; and, if all stories are true, it was by no means a lightsome thing for any one to be compelled to attend the College Kirk, and to hear Dr. Haldane preach in the morning and Dr. Buist in the afternoon. A legend is current in that quarter to this effect, that a person who wanted sleep tried other opiates in vain, and cried out at last, in utter despair, "O for an hour of Dr. ——" In such circumstances Chalmers was made to feel that he had come into a spiritual wilderness ; and realizing the evil effects of this upon his own soul, he was moved to take a side in a controversy which seriously disturbed his relations with his colleagues.

The college law required that all students belonging to

the Established Church should attend every Sabbath a particular place of worship. Liberty to go where they liked was conceded to Dissenters ; but there was no freedom for any who did not claim it under that designation. Such a rule might not have pressed very heavily, if in the church to which the students were driven the preaching had been edifying or attractive. But it was hard, at a time when Scotland was awakening to a new life and its ingenuous youth had begun to feel the stir of a better era, to compel men, whether they would or not, to “sit under” a style of teaching which had almost driven religion from the land. Under any circumstances Chalmers would have revolted under such tyranny ; but, as has been indicated, he had himself groaned under the arrangement, and he was thus more than well disposed to aid in any effort made to secure relief.

His first attempt to alter the state of things was made in connection with a vacancy which occurred in the incumbency of the College Church. The old minister, a Moderate, retired ; and if an earnest Evangelical had been appointed, the grievance would, for a time at any rate, have ceased to press. But the chancellor of the university, with whom the patronage lay, refused to listen to the remonstrance that was addressed to him, and the mischief was once more repeated. One of the professors, and he a man of the well-known dry type, was nominated to the vacant office, and the discontent broke out as loudly and importunately as ever.

The sympathy which he showed on this occasion for the students exposed Chalmers to charges which were most unjust, but in connection with which he gave expression to sentiments in which may be seen the key-note of much of his after-life. Some members of his family had felt so

strongly the burden of the Moderatism of St. Andrews, that they were in the habit of seeking spiritual refreshment now and then in the warmer atmosphere of a Dissenting chapel. With this practice Chalmers had not interfered, and he was accused in consequence of being disloyal to the Establishment.

His answer was in substance this, that the value of the Church of Scotland lay, not in its being an Establishment, but in its being an efficient Church; that life is more than State connection; and that by insisting in all circumstances on the supreme importance of the gospel, you tend to secure the usefulness of any Church to which you may belong.

"I have," said he, "no veneration for the Church of Scotland merely *quasi* an Establishment, but I have the utmost veneration for it *quasi* an instrument of Christian good.....I think it a high object to uphold the Church of Scotland, but only because of its subserviency to the still higher object of upholding the Christianity of our land..... Consistently with this principle, if I knew of any Dissenting chapel where, in point of fact, the members of my family received a deeper, a more powerful, and a more practical impression upon their consciences than in the parish church, I should not feel myself guilty of schism though I recommended and encouraged the members of my family to go to that place where they found the ministration that was most calculated to do them good. And so far from this operating with prejudicial effect upon the Establishment, it just applies to that Establishment the force of a self-correcting principle, by acting with a wholesome reflex influence on the exercise of patronage."

What utter radicalism all this must have sounded when it was first spoken! And yet it is very easy to see how he

came to be drifted into the position which he now defined. The maintenance of the life of God in his soul had come to be regarded by him as an object of prime importance. His diary shows that he felt keenly the depressing influences of St. Andrews Moderatism. Nothing, for example, could well be more significant than this entry : “A better Sabbath than I have had for a long time, *even though I did attend the College Church all day!*” What he got in his ordinary place of worship was not quickening, but the reverse. He was forced to think of others as well as of himself. Very many had not his resources to fall back upon. The mischief being done by the system within the Church must have seemed to him unspeakable. And so he was naturally led to ask whether a Moderate Establishment, merely because it was an Establishment, was worthy of being supported at all hazards. It is more than likely that he was now being taught, as he had never been before, to see that nothing can compensate for the absence of the gospel, and that no sacrifice is too great to secure to a country the universal diffusion in it of evangelical truth.

But there was also another thing which helped to render the stay of Chalmers in St. Andrews less happy than it might have been. This was a dispute with his fellow-professors about the appropriation of certain college funds. The income of the university was spent under the superintendence of the senate, and the members of that body had somehow fallen into the habit of dividing among themselves any surplus that remained after the current expenses of the year had been met. The professor of moral philosophy did not see that he and his colleagues had any right to this money, and he not only said so, but positively refused to accept his share. His fastidiousness on this point was worse than annoying. It set agoing the

rumour that his colleagues were guilty of virtual dishonesty, and bitter words were sometimes bandied about among them. The unpleasantness thus caused had nearly issued in the loss of Chalmers to Scotland. There came to him, while things were yet in an unsettled state, an invitation to occupy the chair of moral science in the London University, and he did not at once put away the offer from him as altogether out of the question. Happily a royal commission had been appointed to inquire into the condition of the Scottish colleges, and he felt disposed to wait for the result. Other things also made a movement across the Border seem not entirely expedient at that time. And so he was preserved to the country to which he properly belonged. But the two things which have been referred to made it clear enough that St. Andrews was not to be his final resting-place, and no one who knew all the facts was much surprised when, after a five years' residence in it, he showed no indisposition to move to Edinburgh.

We turn, however, very gladly from all that to look at his St. Andrews life from two other sides.

It was at this time that he began to take a systematic lead in the affairs of the Church. His native burgh of Anstruther returned him as its representative to the General Assembly, and year after year in succession he sat as a member of that court. The conflict was now not very far off in which he was to play so conspicuous a part, and already the skirmishing which precedes great battles had commenced. He had no difficulty in singling out the side on which he was to fight. He belonged by constitution and conviction to the reforming party, and he ranged himself at once under the flag of Dr. Andrew Thomson and Sir Harry Moncreiff, who were setting their faces against everything, however respectable and time-honoured it

might be, which seemed to them to hinder the efficiency of the Church as an organization for practical work.

In the Assembly of 1824, for example, he took a leading part in two debates. The question discussed in the first was whether Dr. Macfarlan, who was already Principal of the University of Glasgow, could with propriety be appointed also to the incumbency of the High Church in that city. The Moderates said Yes, the Evangelicals No; but the former were still masters of the ship, and they carried their point by a decisive majority. In the other case Chalmers conquered, but the entire number who voted was very much smaller, so that no certain inference could be drawn as to the mind of the whole Assembly. The point settled was, that there was no reason why another Gaelic chapel should not be built in Glasgow because the other Gaelic chapel had still a good many of its seats unlet.

The following year Chalmers brought up the subject of pluralities again in the shape of a general motion of disapproval. He was beaten, of course, but by a majority so small that he was encouraged, not disheartened. The debate which took place, however, in this connection is memorable not so much on its own account, as on account of an incident of singular interest which occurred in the course of it. A speaker on the opposition side supported his arguments by quotations from a pamphlet which, he said, had appeared a few years before. The quotations went to prove, on the authority of a man who could speak from experience, that a minister's work is so little burdensome that he can easily perform it all, and have, when it is done, five free days in the week to spend in any way he likes. The pamphlet was the one which the minister of Kilmany had written in the days of his



spiritual ignorance in reply to the letter, already noticed, of Professor Playfair; and, as usually happens when a personal hit of this kind is made, there was a good deal of satirical laughter awakened in the Assembly.

Chalmers, as the proposer of the motion, had the right of reply; and at the close of the debate he referred, amid breathless silence, to the attack which had been made upon his consistency.

“Sir,” he said, “that pamphlet I now declare to have ✓ been a production of my own, published twenty years ago.....At the time when I wrote it I did not conceive that my pamphlet would do much evil; but, sir, considering the conclusions that have been deduced from it by the reverend gentleman, I do feel obliged to him for reviving it, and for bringing me forward to make my public renunciation of what is there written. I now confess myself to have been guilty of a heinous crime, and I now stand a repentant culprit before the bar of this venerable Assembly.....I was at that time, sir, more devoted to mathematics than to the literature of my profession; and feeling grieved and indignant at what I conceived an undue reflection on the abilities and education of the clergy, I came forward with that pamphlet to rescue them from what I deemed an unmerited reproach, by maintaining that a devoted and exclusive attention to the study of mathematics was not dissonant to the proper habits of a clergyman. Alas, sir! so I thought in my ignorance and pride. I have now no reserve in saying that the sentiment was wrong, and that, in the utterance of it, I penned what was most outrageously wrong. Strangely blinded that I was! What, sir, is the object of mathematical science? Magnitude and the proportions of magnitude. - But *then*, sir, I had forgotten *two magnitudes*: I thought



not of the littleness of time ; I recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity."

The sensation produced by this "recantation" may be imagined. The "resurrection" of the pamphlet did not in the end serve much the cause of the upholders of pluralities.

Another notable debate took place in this Assembly (that of 1825) upon the question of whether a minister who did not know Gaelic could be justifiably intruded into a parish where Gaelic was the language of a considerable number of the people. We refer to it in passing for two reasons: first, because it shows Chalmers in the front rank of the Evangelical party, seconding a motion made by Dr. Andrew Thomson; and, second, because here again appeared the characteristic feature of his churchmanship. He was, as used to be said more frequently afterwards, not so much a *jurist*—looking at things in the light of abstract right or justice—as a *practical reformer*, asking always how arrangements would serve their ends. It does not now seem a great achievement that Andrew Thomson carried his motion in the Little Dunkeld Case by a majority of one hundred and eight to eighty-nine; but the victory was hailed with immense satisfaction at the time as another sign of the turning of the tide. The Church was beginning to waken up to the necessity of seeing her work honestly done, even at the cost of personal feelings and venerable traditions.

Another side of Chalmers's St. Andrews life presents itself when we look at his private and individual efforts in the interest of spiritual religion. He no sooner settled down in the old city than he began a Sabbath school, of which he took the personal superintendence. He gave this work up in 1827 into the hands of John Urquhart,

but only that he might be more free to conduct a Sabbath class for students in his own dining-room. This class had been commenced in 1824, and had for two or three sessions been restricted so as to bear an essentially family character. But the pressure for admission into it became too importunate to be resisted, and Sabbath after Sabbath saw him discoursing on the leading topics of Christian doctrine and personal religion to as many young men as could be crowded into the largest apartment in his house. This meeting became literally a well of life. It told directly upon those who attended it, and there issued from it streams which watered the dry places around; for one student after another was stirred up to become himself a teacher, and Sabbath schools and evangelistic services sprang up in consequence in all parts of the town and district.

Nor was this all. Dr. Chalmers consented to become the president of a missionary society in St. Andrews. It had existed before his coming, but in a very listless way. His accession, however, produced an instantaneous change in its condition. The monthly meetings grew to be so crowded that they required to be transferred to a larger place. Deeply interested himself in the great business of evangelizing the world, he took the trouble to gather together all the intelligence that he could acquire regarding the work. This intelligence he put into shape for the benefit of others. At the monthly "concert for prayer" he gave this forth; and as a result, it might almost be said that the whole city was moved. Certainly the university was moved. "Our college," wrote one of the students of the time, "seems at present to present an aspect something similar to that of the University of Oxford in the days of Hervey and Wesley." Five or six of the students formally devoted

themselves to the missionary service. John Urquhart, one of the noblest of the set, was prevented by an early death from carrying out his purpose. But all the world has heard of Duff; and if the names of Adam, and Nesbit, and Mackay are less illustrious, these all did such work for God in India as makes one think with grateful admiration of the life of Chalmers in St. Andrews.

There were not a few who complained, in a rueful way, of Chalmers's withdrawal from the pulpit. It was indeed a great blow which Glasgow sustained when he was taken away from the peculiar work which he had been performing there. But in his case no fair comparison could be made between chair and pulpit. Wherever he went he carried the fire with him; and although in Fife his audiences were smaller, this was also to be said, that they were more select. In St. Andrews he dealt with the men who were to be the future ministers of Scotland; and in acting as he did he told, through his students, upon a whole generation of his countrymen.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FIRST YEARS IN EDINBURGH.

**B**Y the resignation of Dr. Ritchie, the chair of theology in the University of Edinburgh became vacant in 1827, and Dr. Chalmers was at once proposed as his successor. His appointment could not have been acceptable to all; for Moderatism still commanded a majority in the Assembly, and it must have been somewhat galling to its leaders to see so decided an Evangelical intrusted with the training of the youth who were to form the future ministry of the Church. The claims of Chalmers, however, were so conspicuous that he could not, with any fair show of reason, be passed by; and it is to the credit of the Town Council of Edinburgh that they agreed with entire unanimity to offer him the position. The election took place in October 1827, but the date was too close upon the beginning of the session to allow of his undertaking the work immediately, and he did not deliver his inaugural lecture till the 6th of November 1828—the intervening eleven months having been spent by him in assiduous preparation for his new duties.

The day on which he commenced teaching in Edinburgh was outwardly by no means a genial one—showers of sleet and snow sweeping through the college court—but such a

crowd gathered to hear that a strong body of police was needed to keep things in order. One who has now passed away, himself a most accomplished man, Mr. Cunningham of Prestonpans, describes in glowing terms the impression which was produced by the lecture on those who listened to it. "All felt," he says, "more deeply than they could worthily declare, that it was a most glorious prelude, and that at once and for ever his right to reign as a king in the broad realms of theological science, and to rule over their own individual minds as a teacher, was as unequivocal as his mastery over a popular assembly."

His class-room continued to be crowded all through the session—many attending it who were not regular students, nor even members of the Presbyterian Church—and when notes were compared at the close, it was generally admitted that a distinctly new era had begun in connection with the academic education of the ministry. Formerly the prelections had been often clear, sometimes learned, and students had come forth from the Hall with a more or less competent knowledge of theological systems. But there had never been any approach to "an explosion," and youthful enthusiasms had been rather dulled than fanned into a flame. Now there was a professor in possession to whom Christianity was not a mere framework of dry bones, but a living force. His own soul was on fire; and whatever he felt himself he made his audiences feel. And as a consequence, there immediately began a process which in time told visibly upon the face of Scotland—the inspiring of a race of men who carried the life with them into the pulpits which they filled, and became the means of bringing about a great revival of religion.

A year or two later, Chalmers was surprised by receiving a letter from Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, offering to

present him to the West Church, Greenock. There was thus placed within his reach the most lucrative living in the Church of Scotland—the emoluments belonging to it amounting to about double those which were attached to the chair he was then filling. He was greatly gratified by the compliment which was thus paid to him; but he had no hesitation in at once sending back a refusal, giving the following as his reason for doing so:—

“You may well believe that nothing could induce me to decline the honour and the advantage of such a proposal but a firm conviction of *the superior importance of a theological chair to any church whatever*, along with the rooted preference which I have ever felt for the professorial over the ministerial life.”

This was written in 1831, after an experience of three sessions in Edinburgh, and by that time he must have been fully alive to the greatness of the influence which his position enabled him to exercise. He was at the fountain-head. It was largely in his power to make or mar the ministry of the immediate future. And when he saw, as he could not but do, the signs of a quickening life among his students, it would have been nothing less than a flying in the face of Providence if on any account he had abandoned the post which he had undertaken to fill.

Chalmers was great in very many respects, but in nothing was his greatness made more apparent than in his power over the minds of men. He possessed in a remarkable degree those kingly qualities which cause men to be revered and followed. He was a born leader, and to this hour there are old disciples of his whose eyes kindle when they speak of him. Among the various causes which led directly to the triumph of the Evangelical interest in Scotland, one of

the most potential was the appointment of one so earnest and eloquent to a theological professorship.

These first years in Edinburgh were stirring times in more ways than one. The Church "Conflict," technically so called, had not yet begun, but, as has been already said, the forces which were to take part in it were being mustered for the battle, and preliminary skirmishes were constantly going on. A great restlessness also appeared in political connections. When the battle of Waterloo had been fought, and Europe had settled down after the French revolutionary spirit had been, as was imagined, finally laid, there came a period of calm and apparent content. But this did not last. There were too many anomalies in the British constitution to make it possible for a nation which was growing in intelligence to live on without making efforts at reform. The dangerous temper which appeared toward the close of the previous century began again to manifest itself. There arose from various quarters a cry against the unreasonable possession of exclusive privileges. And there is no telling what might have happened, if Parliament had not given way before the agitation, and made timely concessions to the demands of the people.

One of the measures passed about this time was the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which, among other things, required the taking of the sacrament in the Established Church as a condition of civil office. Chalmers took a keen interest in the struggle which was made for the abolition of these laws; and when at last the bill passed and received the royal assent, he introduced into the General Assembly a motion proposing that the Church of Scotland should express its satisfaction with the result. So reasonable a proposal, however, was keenly resisted by the Moderates, who mustered their whole



strength to defeat the motion, and it was defeated by a majority of one hundred and twenty-three to seventy-seven. The reason why so many men voted to sustain what is now universally recognized as a most objectionable regulation was this, that they looked on the movement for the repeal of the Acts as one inspired by the hostility of Dissent to the Establishment. And what strikes one in reading Dr. Chalmers's speech on the other side, is the largeness of view which enabled him to rise above mere local and personal considerations, and look at great questions in their own proper light.

"Our Scottish Establishment," he said, "stands in need of none of those securities wherewith her fearful sister in the south thought it necessary at one time to prop up what she must then have felt to be her frail and precarious existence. Instead of such securities for us, we ourselves were the objects of jealousy to the hierarchy of England, and thrust, along with its general body of sectarians, to an outfield place beyond the limits of her guarded enclosure. But what has been the result? A striking lesson, if blind intolerance would but learn it. In virtue of an inherent strength, we, in the midst of disabilities, have stood and prospered; and the motto of our northern Church—*Nec tamen consumebatur*—blazes in characters as fresh and undefaced as ever upon her forehead."

This was spoken in 1828, some months after his appointment to the divinity professorship. He was thus again striking his key-note—proclaiming the principle that no trust is to be put in artificial props which do not rest on a foundation of indisputable justice, and that there was no guarantee for the permanence and prosperity of his own Church but such as was to be found in her honestly and efficiently discharging her proper functions.



Next year, in 1829, another question came to the front, that of Catholic Emancipation,—the removal, that is, from members of the Romish Church of those civil disabilities which prevented them, for example, from sitting in the British Parliament. And here again Chalmers appeared on the liberal side. He was now living in Edinburgh, and as a citizen he took part in a great public meeting which was held to promote the agitation. Concerning the speech delivered by him on that occasion, Lord Jeffrey gave it as his deliberate opinion “that never had eloquence produced a greater effect upon a popular assembly, and that he could not believe more had ever been done by the oratory of Demosthenes, Cicero, Burke, or Sheridan.”

The passage in the speech which awakened the greatest enthusiasm was the following:—

“It is not by our fears and our false alarms that we do honour to Protestantism. A far more befitting honour to the great cause is the homage of our confidence ; for what Sheridan said of the liberty of the press admits of most emphatic application to the religion of truth and liberty.....Give the Catholics of Ireland their emancipation ; give them a seat in the Parliament of their country ; give them a free and equal participation in the politics of the realm ; give them a place at the right ear of majesty, and a voice in his counsels ; and give me the circulation of the Bible, and with this mighty engine I will overthrow the tyranny of Antichrist, and establish the fair and original form of Christianity on its ruins.”

“The delivery of this splendid passage,” say the local papers of the day, “which was given with prodigious force, elicited a burst of applause so deafening and enthusiastic, that the effect was altogether sublime. The shouts and

hurrahs were thrice renewed, and it was with difficulty the speaker could proceed."

Still, it will be observed, the same thought rules in his mind. He has unbounded faith in the power of the truth, and he has no belief that its victories will be made surer by its being clad in doubtful armour.

With all that, however, he was not in favour of the Reform Bill. It passed in 1831, amid immense rejoicing, and in Edinburgh, as elsewhere, there was an illumination to celebrate the event. Chalmers did not illuminate, and he had the windows of his house broken in consequence by the mob.

What led him to stand aloof from this popular movement was evidently the fact that he had just been immersed in the study of political economy, and had arrived at certain conclusions which were far from being in harmony with the common beliefs. He had persuaded himself, for example, that the real amelioration of any nation's condition depends not on the possession of political privileges, but on the intelligence and moral excellence of its people. He did not see the force of the proposition which was then so constantly paraded, that every citizen has an original right to a vote. He was satisfied that most exaggerated expectations were being entertained as to the effects which were likely to follow from so wide an extension of the suffrage as was proposed. He knew that many who were to be enfranchised would not make a wise use of their new powers. And, in short, being profoundly convinced that the reforms needed were being begun at the wrong end, he refused to give any countenance to what seemed to him to be very much a great popular delusion. That he somewhat modified his views afterwards cannot be doubted. But everybody's views came to be modified in a certain

degree by the events. The Reform Bill did not bring to the people all that they looked for. They thought it was *bread*, and they were certainly mistaken. But neither was it a *stone*. Abuses were removed which formerly stood in the way of all improvement, and the healthful breeze of public opinion was allowed to blow more freely upon the machinery of government.

His "Treatise on Political Economy," which came out about this time, and on which he had been engaged for years, was published at an unfortunate period. The thoughts of the nation were taken up with expedients which lay very much more ready to its hand than the far-reaching principles whose adoption he advocated. The book was therefore either disregarded or assailed. But not the less may it be expected to survive when other and more ephemeral productions have perished. So high an authority as John Stuart Mill speaks of the author in connection with this work as "a writer many of whose opinions I think erroneous, but who has always the merit of studying phenomena at first hand, and expressing them in a language of his own which often uncovers aspects of the truth that the received phraseologies only tend to hide."

But there is another and peculiarly interesting movement which belongs to these years. It is that with which are associated the names of Campbell of Row, Edward Irving, and Principal Scott, afterwards of Manchester.

We may call it a pseudo-Evangelical movement, because it began with high pretensions to spirituality, it stirred the hearts for a time of all the best people in the country, and if it had continued to be as successful as it was at first, the mischief done would have been incalculable.

Mrs. Oliphant, the novelist, undertook to write the life of Edward Irving, and in prosecuting this task she viewed things in a characteristically imaginative light. Her notion of the period is that a virtually new revelation was made in it to the world. Mr. Campbell preached that all men are already forgiven, and that the faith of the gospel means accepting that as a fact. Mr. Irving taught that Christ assumed the *fallen* nature of Adam, and was, though not a sinner, *peccable*. While both agreed that it was a mistake to assume that the age of miraculous manifestations is past, and held that such gifts of the Spirit had been bestowed upon some of their followers as that they were in very deed enabled to speak with tongues. To Mrs. Oliphant it seemed as if there were a great deal more in all this than the Church of Scotland was disposed to allow, and she was displeased with Chalmers for not interposing in the interest of the new light. She would have had a council of the whole Christian Church convened to consider whether Irving was a prophet or no !

The order that was followed was this. First, a thorough discussion of the principles involved took place in the *Christian Instructor* and elsewhere ; and, secondly, a succession of trials ensued before the Church Courts, in the course of which it was clearly brought out that, whatever could be said for the movement, it was not in harmony with the articles of belief which bound the Establishment together.

The issue has proved the wisdom of the course pursued. M'Leod Campbell became a disciple of Mr. Maurice, with whose Broad-Churchism all are acquainted ; and Irvingism has developed into one of the strangest religious compounds of any age, the Catholic Apostolic Church, in which there is a by no means successful attempt to com-

bine the symbolism of the Old Testament with the doctrine of the New.

Looking back upon this singular episode in our Scottish Church history, one is inclined to think of it as indeed more significant than many have supposed. Mrs. Oliphant says that the movement was divine, and that the Church of Scotland never knew what peace was after it had resolved to resist it. To us its providential aspect seems very different. The Church was awakening out of its sleep; it was beginning in earnest to reform; and the prospects looked every day brighter in favour of the triumph of Evangelicalism. But while the good seed was thus being sown, an enemy did his best to sow tares. The currents were becoming too strong to be successfully opposed in front, and it was a cunning stroke of policy to encourage the opening of a side channel to draw off some of the pressure.

Chalmers did not take at all a prominent part in the doctrinal controversy to which we have been referring. In regard to Campbell he strongly sympathized with him in what seemed to be one of his objects—the setting forth of the *freeness* of the gospel offer; and as for his doctrine of universal pardon, he evidently thought at first that it was a mere eccentricity which might be shaken off. But although he was not one of the active prosecutors in the case, he concurred ultimately in the conclusion come to, that there could be no consistency in allowing him to remain as an authorized teacher in the ministry of the Church.

As for Irving, there were personal reasons why he should not appear conspicuously in conflict with him. He had been his assistant in St. John's; and they were warm friends. But he early formed a decided opinion about his aberrations, and had no hesitation in assenting

to the propriety of his license being withdrawn when he had been compelled to leave Regent Square Church and begin a new "cause" in Newman Street.

Various things had before that occurred to reconcile him to such an issue. He had seen Irving's tendency to eccentricity in Glasgow. "He did not," he tells, "attract a large congregation there, but he completely attached to himself and to his ministry a limited number of persons with whose minds his own was in affinity. I have often observed this effect produced by men whose habits of thinking and feeling are peculiar or eccentric. They possess a *magnetic* attraction for minds assimilated to their own."

Again, referring to the lectures delivered by Mr. Irving in Edinburgh on the subject of prophecy in 1828, he writes: "For the first time heard Mr. Irving in the evening. I have no hesitation in saying that it is quite woful. There is power, and richness, and gleams of exquisite beauty, but withal a mysticism and an extreme allegorization which I am sure must be pernicious to the general cause."

When the Presbyterian Church in Regent Square, London, was finished, Chalmers agreed to open it, and what happened there is reported by himself in the following way:—

"The congregation, in their eagerness to obtain seats, had already been assembled about three hours! Irving said he would assist me by reading a chapter for me in the first instance. He chose the very longest chapter in the Bible, and went on with his exposition for an hour and a half. When my turn came, of what use could I be in an exhausted receiver."

In short, Irving was one of those men who could not be

trusted to move in ordinary grooves. He required a place for himself. And although it would have been better for his own fame and his own usefulness if he could have agreed to be more amenable to rule and order, it was best for himself, and best for the Church, that the tie was cut between them, and he was left free to pursue his course alone.

There is just one other glimpse which we may take of Chalmers in this chapter. In 1830 William IV. ascended the throne, and a deputation from the Church of Scotland was sent to London to tender to him its congratulations. Chalmers was one of the deputation ; and in one of those letters to his children, of which there are so many, and which are so delightful on account of their playfulness and affection, he gives a bright picture of the levee which he attended. "Our deputation," he says, "made a most respectable appearance among them, with our cocked three-cornered hats under our arms, our hands upon our breasts, and our gowns of Geneva upon our backs. Mine did not lap so close as I would have liked, so that I was twice as thick as I should be, and it must have been palpable to every eye at the first glance that I was the greatest man there, and that though I took all care to keep my coat unbuttoned and my gown quite open ; however, let not mamma be alarmed, for I made a most respectable appearance, and was treated with the utmost attention.....We all made a low bow on our first entry, and the king, seated on the throne at the opposite end, took off his hat, putting it on again. We marched up to the middle of the room and made another low bow, when the king again took off his hat. We then proceeded to the foot of the throne and all made a third low bow, on



which the king again took off his hat. After this the Moderator read his address, which was a little long, and the king bowed repeatedly while it was reading."

The fun of all this Chalmers thoroughly appreciated, although there was no man in his Majesty's dominions who was then a more loyal upholder of all the institutions of the kingdom.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### EFFORTS AT CHURCH REFORM AND EFFICIENCY.



PROOF of the estimation in which Chalmers was now held by the whole Church was given in his election to the Moderatorship of the Assembly in 1832. He was then only fifty-two years of age, younger than most of the men have been who have filled that office, and his appointment was seconded in a very graceful way by Principal Macfarlan. The principal was an outstanding member of the Moderate party; but that was not all. He was a pluralist, to whose settlement in the High Church of Glasgow Chalmers had offered a conscientious opposition.

The Assembly was an interesting one. Heresy was still in the air, and no fewer than four cases of divergence from the beaten tracks were brought under the notice of the Court. One was that of an elder, who appealed against the decisions of a Presbytery requiring him, as a condition of office, to sign the Confession of Faith. A second was that of a minister, who insisted on his being left at liberty to preach whatever doctrine he pleased from his pulpit. And a third was that of Mr. Irving. But the swell of the Row movement was evidently subsiding, and the attention of the Church was now to be turned to

a new subject, and that one which was destined to have far more serious consequences.

No fewer than four Synods and seven Presbyteries overtured the General Assembly to take into consideration the question of how best to give effect to the "call" of the people in the settlement of ministers. At the Reformation the doctrine was at once laid down that it is the right and duty of congregations to choose their own pastors. King James, however, believed in a better way, and he instituted the system of patronage, which, with brief intervals of suspension, continued in the Scottish Church till the Revolution of 1688. It was then abolished, but twelve years later it was again restored under Queen Anne.

For a time the lay patrons did not exercise their rights, or, at least, they did not enforce them. The plan of one man, and he, perhaps, not a member of any church himself, judging what sort of minister a congregation ought to be satisfied with, was opposed to the genius of the Scottish people. And they offered to its execution such a determined resistance, that for years after the Revolution no Presbytery ventured to proceed to the ordination of a man who was not acceptable to the parish in which it was proposed to settle him. But things gradually changed. The power of religion in the land became less. Congregations grew indifferent; patrons showed a disposition to assert their legal rights more firmly, and subservient Presbyteries were found ready to use the sword when necessary to suppress inconvenient manifestations of the popular will. By-and-by, peace was restored,—the peace which comes from despair. Vacant parishes saw that there was nothing to be gained by opposing whatever nominee of the patron was sent to them; and if he was

fairly acceptable they submitted to his ministrations, while, if he was not, those who wanted something better joined the Dissenters.

With the return of life to the Church came a growing dissatisfaction with this state of things; all the more that, in the political world, events had taken place which made the leaving of Church members in a condition of pupillage look positively ridiculous. By the passing of the Reform Bill, it had been declared that all possessed of a certain money qualification were capable of taking a part in the election of the country's legislators; and it did seem a little absurd to say that nobody but a lay patron, whom the accident of birth had made the owner of land, was fit to pronounce upon the suitability of this man or the other to preach to a particular congregation.

Happily, amid all the changes in the law which had taken place, the *form* of consulting the people had never been expressly abandoned. Even in the earliest times it had been the custom for the presentee to preach in the vacant pulpit for which he was destined, and for the Presbytery to meet with the people, to learn whether they were willing to give him a "call" or invitation to the place. This form had become a farce. Presbyteries had proceeded to settlements when there was no more than one name attached to the call. Still the ancient framework remained, and what now began to be agitated was the question of whether, by vitalizing the old form, such a voice might not be given to the people in the choice of their ministers as might meet and satisfy the demand that had sprung up for popular election in the Church as well as in the Commonwealth.

The Moderates, however, were deaf to the knocking that had come to the door. There was an Evangelical Modera-

tor in the chair of the Assembly, but Dr. Cook still commanded the majority on the floor. And while Professor Brown of Aberdeen proposed that the overtures be remitted to a committee for consideration, Principal Macfarlan moved (and carried by 129 to 44) that "the Assembly judge it unnecessary and inexpedient to adopt the measures recommended in the overtures now before it."

One can picture to oneself the smile of satisfaction which mantled the face of Dr. Cook when he learned the state of the vote. There, he would no doubt say, *that* matter has received its *quietus*! But the Moderates have never been famous for discerning the signs of the times. They have usually resisted all improvements until further resistance was seen to be hopeless, and they have given in only after irretrievable mischief has been done. The proposal to see whether something could not be made of the call had *not* received its *quietus*.

Next year the matter was brought up afresh, and Chalmers himself, no longer tied to the chair, was able to assume the practical leadership of the Evangelical party. He moved that the dissent of a majority of male heads of families, being communicants, should have the effect of setting aside the presentation of a patron, unless that dissent could be proved to be based on a corrupt and malicious combination. His following was greater than that of Professor Brown in 1832. He was beaten only by a majority of twelve. But still he *was* beaten. The tide had not yet quite turned. And it was reserved for Lord Moncreiff, in 1834, to achieve the first decisive victory in the great conflict which had now fairly begun. In that year there passed the *Veto Law*, which was constructed in terms of the motion which Chalmers made in 1833.

It is not necessary at this time of day to vindicate the rights of the Christian people. All the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland have now adopted the practice of popular election, and may be assumed to approve of the principle. But at the time of which we are now speaking public opinion was not so advanced, and those who then agitated for the moderate reform described were exposed to as much abuse as if they were radicals and revolutionaries.

The real truth was, however, that the Veto Act was in spirit a conservative measure. Lord Moncreiff and others saw that a new era had begun, that the tide of change was coming in upon all the institutions of the country like a flood; and it was actually to preserve patronage, which he thought had its own value, that he proposed a concession to meet the reasonable demands of the people. *They*, he believed, had their own legal place to fill in connection with the settlement of ministers, and, in freely allowing them to occupy that place, he considered that he was doing what was most prudent in the interest of the Establishment as it was.

The time came when the Moderates tried to upset the decision. They said that it was not legal, that the Assembly had no right to pass it, and so on; but, besides that the contrary could be affirmed with an imposing show of reason, nothing could be more short-sighted for their own interest than the policy of opposition which they elected to pursue. They would keep everything and concede nothing; and the result is, that after breaking up the Church they have lost completely the very institution for whose sake they fought. Patronage, in its then form, which Lord Moncreiff would have conserved, has been abolished; and whatever may be thought about that result

now, Dr. Cook and Principal Macfarlan would certainly have hesitated about their course of procedure if they could have foreseen how it would end. It has become again the fashion in some quarters to speak well of the Moderates, as if they were the wise, temperate, deep-thinking men of their generation. Nothing could be further from the truth. It can be conclusively demonstrated that, even as Church politicians, they were as blind as the Bourbons.

It was not till some years later that the other conflict began—that about the essential nature of a Christian Church and its rights as a kingdom within a kingdom. Meanwhile, a new life was seen stirring throughout the whole country. Duff, who had been ordained under the presidency of Chalmers in 1829 as the first missionary of the Church of Scotland, returned in 1835 to tell of his “unparalleled success” in Calcutta; and in the course of a tour which he made over Scotland, he awakened by his eloquence an altogether unprecedented enthusiasm in the cause of the evangelization of the world. Good people then began to ask if Israel was to be forgotten; and the result was M’Cheyne and Bonar’s mission of inquiry into the condition of the Jews in their own land. The state of our own countrymen in the colonies also became a matter of concern, and a scheme was instituted for their benefit. And, in short, one after another, the revived Church took up its responsibilities, and addressed itself to the discharge of them with a whole-heartedness which implied that no thought of the coming troubles had yet entered into its mind.

In these efforts to increase the usefulness of the Church Chalmers took a great part. What he especially set his heart upon was, as he was accustomed to express it, “*to*

*sufficiently thick-set Establishment.*" He saw enough in Glasgow and elsewhere to convince him that multitudes of people were living without religion, because there were no places of worship to which they could go, and no Christian agencies looking after them. And when, in 1834, he was appointed by the General Assembly the Convener of a new "Church Accommodation Committee," he said—"I can truly affirm that, had I been left to make a choice among the countless diversities of well-doing, this is the one office that I should have selected as the most congenial to my taste."

For several years the country rang with the subject of Church extension. The theory of Chalmers was, that the buildings needed should be erected by voluntary contributions, but that the Government should supply a part at least of the endowments required for the maintenance of an additional staff of ministers. By this time, however, the Dissenters had attained to considerable political influence in the State, and first the Whigs and then the Tories refused to respond to the appeals which were made to them for help. But the disappointment did not prove in any way disastrous to the scheme. "As the ear of the Government seemed to close, the ear of the country seemed to open."

For Church extension, as he himself was wont to put it, he knocked at the door of a Whig ministry; and they refused to endow. He then knocked at the door of a Tory ministry; they, perhaps, would have endowed, but they offered to enslave. He then turned aside from both to knock at the door of the general population.

The appeal thus made to the people brought back a magnificent response. In a few months a sum of £300,000 was subscribed, and in all the great cities and other centres



of population additional ecclesiastical edifices began to be reared. Within seven years no fewer than two hundred and twenty new churches were added to the strength of the Establishment. No wonder that Chalmers came to speak of this era—the era of the Church's extension—as one which was “as broadly marked and as emphatically presented to the notice of the ecclesiastical historian as any which it was customary to consider as instances of signal revival and divine interposition.”

In these years honours came thick upon him. He was elected in 1834 first a Fellow and then a Vice-President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. About the same time came a most unexpected intimation from Paris that he had been chosen a corresponding member of the Royal Institute of France. And in the summer of 1835, a still more gratifying compliment was paid in his having the degree of LL.D. conferred upon him by the University of Oxford.

Chalmers had long felt in many ways the fascinations of England. He admired its scenery, he liked its people, he venerated its national Church, he experienced unbounded delight in visiting its cathedrals, and for its ancient university seats he had the reverence of a devotee.

His reception at Oxford, therefore, made a very bright spot in his history; and all the more that he was at the time harassed by his vain efforts to procure Government aid for his scheme of Church extension.

“We are living,” he wrote, “with the Professor of Divinity at Christ Church, Dr. Burton, where we are entertained with ‘all the elegance of lettered hospitality.’ .....I walk about in a doctor’s black gown, with the common university cap.....The most interesting introduction



which I have had in Oxford is to Keble the poet, author of 'The Christian Year.'"

"Rarely have I witnessed as much enthusiasm in the Oxford Theatre," wrote Lord Elgin, who was present as a student, "as was manifested when he presented himself to go through the ceremony of admission.....Dr. Chalmers was himself deeply affected by the warmth with which he was greeted, and I think I might almost venture to say that he looked upon this visit to Oxford as one of the most pleasing incidents in his career."

These gleams of sunshine were succeeded, in 1836, by a very bitter trial. There are not many now living who have any distinct remembrance of what was involved in "the Moderatorship controversy." But those few who are able to go back upon it tell how it wrought a widespread devastation—separating for the time chief friends, and making a breach in the Church which was not healed for years. It arose out of the proposal to elevate Principal Lee to the chair of the Assembly. This proposal was vehemently resisted by Chalmers, who did not consider Lee to be sound upon the burning question of the moment—the need of Government interference to secure a sufficiently "thick-set Establishment." Some of those who took a lead in the Evangelical movement did not agree with him in his opposition, and appeared openly as Lee's supporters. The controversy rapidly extended, and became keen and personal; and men who before were united in one band for the Church's good, came to pass each other as strangers in the street.

One of those who suffered in this storm was the late Lord Cowan, from whom, only a month or two before his death, we received a most painfully interesting account of

the Moderatorship episode. He had taken an active and laborious part in the Church extension agitation; but he befriended Lee, and for some years Chalmers and he passed without a sign of mutual recognition. The time came, however, when the liberty, and therefore the very life, of the Church was threatened; and a sense of common danger began to draw together again those who had been estranged. The face of the good old judge softened as he proceeded to tell how *his* reconciliation took place. He was passing along one of the principal streets of Edinburgh when he saw Chalmers at a little distance coming up a cross street. He continued his walk, however, as if he had seen a stranger. But he was suddenly brought to a stand by a hearty voice calling out his own name. He stopped; Chalmers came up with a face full of earnestness and kindness, shook him cordially by the hand, and putting his arm within his, proceeded to pour into his ear his thoughts and hopes about the Church's conflict. The Moderatorship controversy was forgotten in view of far higher interests.

As an illustration of Chalmers's character the controversy is suggestive, as showing how absorbing was his interest in Church extension, and with what passionate energy he devoted himself to the work.

Engaged as he was in strengthening his own Church in Scotland, it was natural that he should take a keen interest also in the other Established Churches of the country. These were being attacked from various quarters. To satisfy the demands of the Dissenters and others, various commissions of inquiry had been appointed, and some of the reports given in as the result had produced a feeling of wide-spread anxiety. Among other recommendations

offered this was one, that the Irish Establishment should be reduced and the funds so saved devoted to other than ecclesiastical purposes. Such politicians as the Duke of Wellington became greatly alarmed at the course of events as thus indicated. "People talk," said his Grace, "of the war in Spain and the Canada question, but all that is of little moment. The real question is, *Church, or no Church?*" And so too thought many earnest individual Christians. To stem a tide which threatened to work such mischief, it was proposed to take systematic measures for the enlightenment of the public mind. A course of lectures in London on Church Establishments was projected. Chalmers was invited to deliver them, and he consented.

The first of these lectures was given on the 25th of April 1838, the audience being remarkably select, royalty itself being represented in the person of the Duke of Cambridge. "From the first word that escaped the lips of the lecturer till the concluding sentence, which died away amid the acclamations of the audience,"—so say the newspapers of the day,—“the vivid interest was sustained with a deep and unflagging intensity.”

A still larger gathering assembled to hear the second lecture,—peers, prelates, and M.P.'s all displaying an extraordinary eagerness to hear the eloquent Scotchman. And still from day to day the tide rose and swelled, until at the close the enthusiasm broke through all bounds. "Carried away by the impassioned utterance of the speaker, long ere the close of some of his finest passages was reached the voice of the lecturer was drowned in the applause, the audience rising from their seats and breaking out into tumultuous approbation." "The doctor," writes an eyewitness, "sat, when delivering his lectures, behind a small table, the hall in front being densely crowded with one of

the most brilliant audiences that ever assembled in Britain. It was supposed that at least five hundred of those present were peers and members of the House of Commons. The sitting attitude of Dr. Chalmers seemed at first irreconcilable with much energy or effect. But such an anticipation was at once dispelled by the enthusiasm of the speaker, responded to, if possible, by the still more intense enthusiasm of the audience ; and occasionally the effect was even greatly increased by the eloquent man springing unconsciously to his feet and delivering with overwhelming effect the more magnificent passages,—a movement which, on one occasion at least, was imitated by the entire audience, when the words, '*The king cannot! the king dare not!*' were uttered in accents of prophetic vehemence that must still ring in the ears of all who heard them, and were responded to by a whirlwind of enthusiasm which was probably never exceeded in the history of eloquence."

Nine bishops of the Church of England were present during the delivery of the closing lecture of the series. So profound an impression was made by the course on the moneyed people of London that they forthwith subscribed £5000 in aid of the Church extension movement in Scotland. And when the lectures were published,—proving, as their title claimed that they had done, that "the establishment and extension of National Churches afford the only adequate machinery for the moral and Christian instruction of a people,"—they were scattered broadcast over the land, as supplying the most powerful possible counteractives to the levelling doctrines which were then being disseminated.

There is something almost pathetic in the thought that the time was then not far distant when the lecturer himself was to take the lead in the setting up of a Dis-

established Church. But a very cursory glance at the lectures themselves will show how utterly consistent he was throughout. He valued an Establishment because of its practical utility. If it was rightly constituted, and left free to do its own full work, he had unbounded confidence in its capabilities. But he never for a moment forgot that a State alliance might be purchased at too dear a rate; and when, a few years later, he withdrew from his chair in the University of Edinburgh rather than submit to the new conditions imposed on his Church by the Court of Session, his testimony to the supreme importance of spiritual freedom was all the weightier that, so short a while before, he had spoken so strongly and so publicly in vindication of Establishments.

How entirely unsuspecting he was of the existence of a door through which the State might enter into the Church and ravage it, is seen by the explanation which he offered to his brilliant audience of the then relations of Church and State in Scotland:—

“We have no other communication with the State,” said he, “than that of being maintained by it, after which we are left to regulate the proceedings of our great home mission with all the purity, and the piety, and the independence of any missionary board. We are exposed to nothing from without which can violate the sanctity of the apostolical character, if we ourselves make no surrender of it. In things ecclesiastical we decide all. Some of these things may be done wrong, but still they are our majorities which do it. They are not, they cannot be forced upon us from without. We own no head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ.”

At the very time these words were spoken there were signs of a coming storm. A month or two before, the

Court of Session had pronounced a judgment in the famous Auchterarder case, which seemed to indicate that a claim would be put forward by the State to interfere in ecclesiastical matters if it thought fit. But the gravity of the crisis was not then realized, and Chalmers no doubt thought, as the Assembly of 1838 believed, that a firm resistance on the part of the Church would prevent any serious attempt being made on its inherent independence.

Belonging to this era in Chalmers's life are some interesting episodes in which other aspects of his character appear. We have referred to one or two of these already, —such as his tour among the cathedral cities of England, and his short residence in the University of Oxford. Another pleasant event was his first excursion to France. He spent nearly three weeks in Paris, and then made a short tour in Normandy. This was in June 1838.

Among others on whom he called was Guizot. "Found him," he writes, "at home. He speaks English tolerably. Struck with the smallness of his establishment; certainly not superior to the average of the Writers to the Signet in Edinburgh. Mentioned my 'Christian and Civic Economy.' Told him how much his opinions on education were valued in England. *He said that the connection between the moral and the economical was a subject altogether new and unknown in France.* Took cordial leave of him."

"Walked over to the Institute at twelve, and attended a sitting of the Academy of Moral and Political Science. M. Mignet introduced me. Taken into the centre of the oval green table, around which the members are placed. Mignet spoke a good deal on business matters, and seemed to do it sensibly and impressively. The room is a large oblong; the table annular, and is an ellipse of great

eccentricity. The president's platform is at the extremity of the conjugate axis. The members sit round the exterior circumference of the table, and the strangers on two rows of forms along the walls.

"M. Wilks told us frightful things of what he termed the insolence of the French against God in the matter of the cholera. They introduced it into their theatres; ridiculed and defied it; boasted that French science would prevail against it; remained stout while it only visited other countries, or even the poor in their own; till at length it came upon all at the rate of one thousand five hundred a day, when there was a universal terror."

In company with Mr. Erskine, Chalmers paid a visit to the Duc de Broglie, and stayed over a Sunday in his château. His account of the day is interesting, one of the guests being Madame de Stael:—

"Found the morning worship party in the library at eleven. The duke read a chapter of the French Bible, the tenth of John, at a table; the duchess, opposite to him, read a sermon, one of Audeber's. We then all knelt, and she uttered a French prayer. Could not follow it, but her frequent 'O Seigneur,' in a most devotional tone, went to my heart. Whether the prayer was extemporized or learned by heart I know not. At three a small party conversed in the duchess's own apartment, when I read a chapter and expounded. My topic was appropriation, from the tenth of Romans. It gave rise to a brief conversation. Madame de Stael said I had given her comfort. All here are Catholics, but the duchess and Madame de Stael. Was shown Diodati's translation of my 'St. John's Sermons.' Family worship in the evening, consisting of a chapter and the Lord's Prayer, at which we knelt, the



duchess officiating. About seven domestics in the morning, and fifteen in the evening."

Chalmers was naturally greatly interested in the good lady who thus officiated as chaplain in her family; and when, a few months after, he heard of her death, he wrote a warm letter of sympathy to her husband, saying in it, among other things, "In the Duchesse de Broglie I have lost the most exalted and impressive of all the acquaintances I had made for many years. Her kindness during the few days I lived under your hospitable roof will never, never be effaced from my grateful recollection. Her conversation, and, above all, her prayers, poured forth in the domestic circle, and which at the time of their utterance fell upon my ears like the music of paradise, have left a fragrance behind them, and the memory of them is sweet."

Perhaps there was no period in Chalmers's life during which his influence for good was so great as that which we have been reviewing in this chapter. The service he rendered to his own Church in connection with its extension was immense; but that was only one of many directions in which the expulsive power of his new affections was manifested. His fame brought him into intimate contact with the higher as well as with the lower classes of society, and there are testimonies innumerable to the fact that no one ever met him without being wholesomely impressed by the Christian fervour and noble simplicity of his character. It was a great achievement to carry Evangelicalism of the most decided type into the slums of Glasgow; it was a still greater to secure a respectful hearing for it in the proudest circles of the land.



## CHAPTER IX.

### FIGHT FOR A FREE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.



AS a churchman, Chalmers was intensely practical. He had no love for controversy for its own sake, nor was he ever a mere *doctrinaire*, concerned above all things about the carrying through of abstract theories. What chiefly occupied his thoughts after his conversion was how best and soonest to bring his country under the power of that gospel which he had himself come to accept, and to that end all his individual efforts were directed. He aimed at it in Glasgow when he set agoing his territorial system; he had it still in his eye when he accepted first a philosophical and then a theological professorship; it was to promote the same object that he roused the country in the interest of Church extension, and submitted to the humiliation of beating like a dun at the doors of successive ministries in Downing Street; and he was still under the influence of what might well be called his ruling passion when he appeared in London before peers and prelates and pled for the maintenance of National Establishments of religion.

But there was a principle which had been burned into his mind in connection with the study of political economy—namely this, that no mechanical adjustment of things will ever produce satisfactory results if in that adjustment

there is anything opposed to higher moral and spiritual laws ; and he felt that he had no option but to throw himself in 1839 into the conflict which then began in earnest between the Church and the State.

He was a strong supporter of National Churches, and was prepared to do a great deal to secure the continuance and extension of the State's support to his own communion. But an Establishment based on the assumption that the Church might be exposed to secular control in the discharge of its own proper functions, he held to be, on Scripture grounds, indefensible, and, on practical grounds, unworkable ; and for the sake, in the most direct sense, of the great cause he had at heart, he turned aside to resist the attempt which was made to impose such an Establishment upon Scotland.

A few words will suffice to explain the essential nature of the issue which arose at this time.

It will be remembered that to meet, in a conservative spirit, the demand which had arisen to secure for congregations an influential voice in the election of their ministers, the Veto Act had been passed. Under that law it was arranged that if a majority of male heads of families, being communicants, formally dissented from the settlement of a presentee to a parish, this dissent was to be made effective by the Presbytery. No more moderate measure could have been thought of ; for if, as some insisted afterwards, the rule should rather have been followed of rejecting a man who had not a sufficient number of names adhibited to his *call*, things would have been worse for him if he did not prove acceptable. People will more readily refuse or neglect to sign a *call* than take the positive step of entering a *dissent*. It is also necessary to remember that the Church was excessively anxious to

avoid even the chance of a collision with the State; and guarantees did seem to be given that the line was absolutely clear, when a Lord of Session undertook to propose the Veto, when the Lord Advocate for the time being expressed his belief that it would be agreeable to the Government, and when the Lord Chancellor, if he was not consulted beforehand, expressed his admiration of the measure immediately after it was passed. Nor should it be forgotten that experience soon testified to the value of the system. Over a hundred settlements took place under it, with content to the people and advantage to the Church.

But there were two classes of persons who could not acquiesce cheerfully in the new order of things. There were, first, the "stickit preachers," as they were called, who had no hope of getting a living except through the interposition of all-powerful patrons; and second, there was the Moderate party, who were constitutionally and conscientiously opposed to giving the people any influential place within the domain of the Church.

To do the latter justice, it was not they who set the heather on fire: they heaped on fuel and fanned the flames when the spark was kindled, and they are chiefly to blame for the present ecclesiastical condition of Scotland; but the person who applied the torch was a "probationer," who would probably never have got into a manse at all if he had not stirred up the civil powers to help him. This probationer was presented to Auchterarder, a parish with a population of three thousand souls. When his call was submitted for signature, only two persons were persuaded to put their names to it, and the Presbytery came to the conclusion that they could proceed no further in that matter. But this was not the view of the case taken by

the presentee. He intimated his opinion that the law under which the Presbytery acted was not good law—that, in fact, the Church in passing the Veto Act had exceeded its powers; and he appealed to the Court of Session to declare as much, and to take the necessary steps to secure his receiving justice. It is not needful to go fully into the story. Enough to say that the Church followed the prosecutor into the civil courts for obvious reasons. Without prejudicing the question of its own inherent right to make any regulation which might seem to it indispensable in the interests of true religion, it recognized the title of the State to decide, for its own guidance, whether the terms of its concordat or agreement with the Church had been infringed, and it was anxious, for a very good reason, to show that it really had not been so infringed in the present case. For it admitted that if the State was not satisfied, it would have a perfect right to withdraw the temporalities.

The Court of Session, in 1838, by a majority of eight to five, decided against the Assembly, and the House of Lords a year later confirmed the judgment. So far, then, as the State was concerned, the course was clear. It was advised by its acknowledged legal counsellors that the terms of the concordat had been broken, and that the Veto Act did involve an infringement of its rights.

The conclusion was perfectly intelligible, and it was one which, though much to be regretted, might have awakened no bitterness. When two parties make a bargain about anything, the right must be reserved to each of judging whether the terms of the bargain have been kept. But the Church was startled by the announcement, in speeches from the bar and bench, of principles which cut far deeper than the question of the legality of the Veto. She learned that the State claimed the right to decide on disputed

points of frontier, not for herself alone, but *for the Church also*; and she then wakened up to realize that a conflict was before her involving an interest higher than that of non-intrusion—the interest, namely, of spiritual independence.

What the Court of Session held upon the inter-relations of Church and State in Scotland may be gathered from one single deliverance of its Lord President.

“That our Saviour,” said he, “is the Head of the Kirk of Scotland in any temporal, or legislative, or judicial sense, is a position which I can dignify by no other name than absurdity. THE PARLIAMENT is the temporal head of the Church, from whose acts, and from whose acts alone, it exists as the National Church, and FROM WHOM IT DERIVES ALL ITS POWERS.”

For a time it was not known how far those principles would be carried, and in two successive years, 1838 and 1839, the General Assembly contented itself with the adoption of comparatively general resolutions. In the former year, after the judgment of the court below had been given, but when there yet remained an appeal to the House of Lords, the Church felt it needful to do no more than meet the Erastian utterances of the judges by a counterblast in favour of spiritual independence; while in 1839, when the highest court had spoken, the Assembly seemed still to hope that things might mend if it bowed, so far as it was able to do so, to the decision arrived at, and agreed “to offer no further resistance to the claims of Mr. Young or of the patron to the emoluments of the benefice of Auchterarder.” In other words, the expectation was cherished that, if the State did continue to insist that where the Veto Act was enforced the law was broken, it would be satisfied to punish the disobedience in its own way,—that is, with the withdrawal of its endowment.

But a spirit of infatuation seemed at this time to take possession of the judicial courts of Scotland, and they proceeded to pursue a course which produced results the very reverse of what they wanted, and by which their reputation was seriously tarnished.

It is a maxim of "common law" that if a man steals from another, that other has no right to resort to reprisals and steal in his turn from the thief. But this maxim was conspicuously disregarded forty years ago by our Court of Session. It accused the Church of crossing the Civil frontier and infringing on strictly civil rights, and, with more vigour than either justice or dignity, it avenged itself by following the intruder into *her* domain and insisting on exercising spiritual functions!

A brief reference to two cases will illustrate this course of action. The ministry of Scotland was, as has often been stated, divided at this time into two marked classes, the Evangelicals and the Moderates; and these were distributed in such a way that certain presbyteries were preponderatingly Moderate, and certain others were preponderatingly Evangelical. A majority of the Presbytery of Dunkeld was Evangelical, and they acted according to their light in the case of Lethendy. There the first man presented was vetoed, and the Crown, which had the patronage, immediately nominated another who was more acceptable to the people. But the rejected presentee was not so easily got rid of. After all the steps had been taken with a view to the settlement of the second presentee, and nothing remained but the single act of his ordination, an interdict was issued by the Court of Session forbidding the performance of that purely spiritual service. The Presbytery, in its perplexity, sought counsel from the General Assembly; and its Commission, with only two dis-

sentient voices, ordered it to proceed. The right of the State to do what it liked with *the benefice* was fully recognized, but even members of the Moderate party were indignant that the Civil Court should come in and say to any ecclesiastical court that its will behoved to be regarded even in such a matter as *ordination*. But the event showed that the Court of Session was in earnest in its determination to coerce the Church within its own province; for when the Presbytery proceeded to do as the Assembly directed, it was summoned to Edinburgh to answer for itself, and, if it was not consigned to a jail for the offence it had committed, it escaped that ignominy only through the clemency of a majority of the judges.

It was plainly intimated, however, that a continuance of such clemency was not to be calculated on. "I suppose," said the Dean of Faculty Hope significantly, "by this time the Church perceives that the violation of another interdiction is a matter which they had better not embark in."

"To me," replied Chalmers, in reference to this threat, "there is something most coarsely and revoltingly untasteful in this bravado. It is like the act of an executioner making demonstration with his rope in the eyes of his victim before he fastens it on. My only reply is, that should he dare to put it in execution, he will find that he has completely mistaken the strength of principle which exists in the bosoms of Scottish churchmen."

Chalmers did not take too much for granted when he said this, as was illustrated in another quarter of the country, where the Court of Session found a Presbytery of a very different type from that of Dunkeld. The Presbytery in question was that of Strathbogie, and in it a decidedly Moderate element prevailed.

Here, too, there was a disputed settlement. A vacancy



having occurred in Marnoch, a preacher was nominated to the charge who was intensely objectionable to the people, and only one man, the keeper of a public-house, could be got to sign his call. Nevertheless, the Presbytery, being Moderates, would have at once proceeded to his settlement if an appeal had not been taken to the superior courts, and if the General Assembly had not interposed in the interest of the parish and directed that the presentee should be rejected. But the disappointed man was not to be suppressed. He applied for help to the Court of Session, and got it. What followed it would take too long to tell particularly ; but enough may be said to show what happened when the Court encountered, not an opposing Presbytery whom it had to threaten with imprisonment, but a subservient one that was eager to do its bidding. A new generation can now judge as to which of the two was most injured in the end.

Receiving the orders of the Civil Court to proceed to the settlement, the Presbytery addressed itself to the congenial task, regardless of the warnings and prohibitions of its ecclesiastical superiors. The Church, through its supreme court, in giving specific directions as to how it should act, had become virtually bound to bear the burden of any unpleasant consequences which might follow from obedience to its commands; but this was nothing to the Moderate ministers of Strathbogie. To intrude a man into a cure of souls on the call of one individual, in the face of earnest remonstrances from the whole remainder of the population, and in opposition to the authoritatively expressed mind of the Church, seemed to them a high duty when it was done by the direction of the civil magistrate. Hence they held resolutely on their way, and step after step was taken with a view to the ordination of the presentee.

This, of course, was rebellion,—as much so as that of the commander of an outpost who, in the crisis of a battle, fights for his own hand, or takes his orders, not from his superior officers, but from the enemy. In this light the matter was viewed by the General Assembly. Finding that the men were not to be arrested by ordinary means, it suspended them from their ministerial functions. But even this was of no avail. Backed by the Court of Session, which in effect said, “Never mind what the General Assembly does; take your orders from us: you are just as much qualified as ever to perform spiritual acts,” they daringly went on to take the presentee on trial, and, in the presence of a rabble who had gathered from a distance to witness the extraordinary spectacle, they solemnly set apart Mr. Edwards to the office of the holy ministry. Such readiness to serve the civil as against the ecclesiastical authorities merited and received a reward from the Court of Session. A regular cordon was drawn around the district within which these “loyal” men laboured, and civil pains and penalties were threatened against all who presumed to preach in any of their parishes without their permission. And it was now that Dr. Chalmers’s warning words to the Dean of Faculty came to be most conspicuously fulfilled. The leading men of the Church boldly and openly violated the prohibition issued by the Civil Court against preaching in Strathbogie. They held that no court, however high, had any right to issue such a prohibition; and, instead of its coming true that the Church drew back in fear from doing what it considered to be its duty on account of the terrible aspect assumed by the State, it may be said that something quite the contrary took place. The State became alarmed at the dangerous commotion it had excited, and was afraid to enforce its own menaces.

The Assembly proceeded to depose the men who had chosen to defy its authority to the uttermost. The Court of Session did not venture to call to account a single offender for breach of its repeated interdicts.

The truth is, that that court did not come with much credit out of the whole business. It is a perilous thing for a court of justice to lose its temper,—as Lord Cockburn, who was behind the scenes, tells us it did,—and to enter the lists of a controversy as a partisan. It has powerful weapons to use in a fight—the weapons of fine and imprisonment—but it has no chance in the long run of succeeding in a conflict in which the heart and conscience of a multitude of men are profoundly engaged.

As for the Strathbogie ministers, they continued in the anomalous condition into which they were brought by the cruel kindness of the Court of Session. The sentence of deposition passed on them was never removed, and in the eyes of all who believe in Church order they were to the last simply laymen, administering the sacraments, not by ecclesiastical, but simply by secular authority.

These internal conflicts, however, could not continue without ruinous consequences; and when the law was finally laid down that a Presbytery was bound to intrude a man into a parish whether he was acceptable to the people or not, if his life and doctrine were unobjectionable, and that in all cases of disputed jurisdiction between Church and State it belonged to the Civil Courts to determine *for both* which should give way,—when these two points were *judicially* settled, it became clear as day that the Evangelicals could not go on unless some alteration was made on the constitution of the Establishment. Come what might, they could not assent to the possibility of outrages such as had taken place at Marnoch being repeated,

nor could they agree to work under a system which recognized the right of the Civil Court to interdict the free preaching of the gospel in any district of the country.

One hope remained, that the legislature would interfere, and a succession of appeals was made with that end in view. They were all, however, made in vain. Our statesmen were as blind to the real character of the crisis as were the Scottish Moderates. Indeed the former were materially influenced by the opinions of the latter. Again and again they were assured that the agitation was no more than a breeze on the surface, and that with a little *firmness* the commotion would be quelled. It does not say much for human nature, and especially for such Christian human nature as they had, that men like Dr. Cook and others should have believed in the possibility of their Evangelical brethren quietly acquiescing in the want of what they professed to regard as vital when they saw that the thing was not to be given.

But such a delusion was cherished. A disruption was rendered inevitable. And time has brought its Nemesis. It was in the interest of political and religious conservatism that the moderate and reasonable demands of the Church were resisted. There was seen at the back of the Evangelical movement a dreaded spectre,—the spectre of the democracy! And what has happened? If Sir Robert Peel and Dr. Cook were to revisit Scotland at this hour they would lift up their hands in amazement. In order to conserve a few privileges of no great value, the Establishment was broken up; the Scotch have become by far the most radical section of her Majesty's subjects; and the very Church for which all the sacrifices were made has lost its patrons, and "sunk," as the old-fashioned Moderates would have expressed it, into being the most democratically constituted sect north of the Border.

Chalmers's connection with the whole conflict, of which we have given this brief account, was most intimate.

From the outset he warned the aristocracy against taking up a prejudice with reference to the reform movements of the Church, under the impression that these movements were of a disorderly and revolutionary character. "There is no affinity," said he, "whatever between the demand, the honest demand, of the common people for a pure gospel, and those demands which are lifted up in the loud accents of turbulence and menace for the extension of their rights as citizens. There is a total distinction and dissimilarity between these two things. Even an anti-patronage clergyman—let alone a vetoist—is just as unlike a Chartist or a Radical as William Wilberforce is unlike to William Cobbett."

Speaking at a later period, when the interdict had been issued prohibiting preaching in the district of Strathbogie, and when it was thus made patent to all that the question then raised was not merely how far the people ought to be allowed a voice in the election of their ministers, but what amount of spiritual liberty the Church was to enjoy under the Establishment, he said :—

"There is but one way of disposing of the question of spiritual independence. It is a question on which all compromise is impossible; we have no choice. It is not a question of degree, it is a question of principle; and when called to recede by a single inch from that line of demarcation between the ecclesiastical and the civil on which we have planted our footsteps we have only one reply—that we cannot, we dare not. We saw the mischief at its commencement; we saw it in what may be termed its seminal principle from the very first deliverance of the Civil Courts in the case of Auchterarder. The public did

not comprehend, and, at the time, did not sympathize with us. The celebrated interdict against preaching has at length opened their eyes; it has been a great astonishment to them, but it was no astonishment to us. The Court of Session have all along been most consistent with themselves. We were not at all surprised by their last inroad on the hallowed ground of the Church; nor should we be in the least surprised though, assuming a farther mastery over the gospel's most sacred ordinances, they were to give forth their prohibitions and their mandates on the matter of sacraments, as they have already done on the matter of sermons, and compel, at their bidding, the prostrate Church to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper to all or any whom they shall judge in a civil action to have made good their right to it.....Be it known unto all men that we shall not retract one single footstep, we shall make no submission to the Court of Session. They may force the ejection of us from our places,—they shall never, never force us to the surrender of our principles; and if that honourable Court shall again so far mistake their functions as to repeat or renew the inroads they have already made, we trust they will ever meet with the same reception they have already gotten—to whom we shall give place by subjection, no, not for an hour,—no, not by an hair-breadth.”

That it might not be said that he fulminated at a distance, but was afraid to place himself within reach of danger, he went in person to Strathbogie and preached in violation of the interdict. Perhaps that act helped to protect others. Certainly the minds of some of the prelates who had not so long before listened to his eloquent defence of National Churches would have been opened to the suspicion that something was seriously amiss if the news had reached

them that Chalmers was in prison. *Unfortunately*, as we may almost say,—for the incident would have had a dramatic interest,—the word seems to have gone forth from the higher powers that the Court of Session was “going too far.” At any rate, the preachers were suffered to return to their homes in peace; and the only substantial result of the episode was that a good many places in the North which had been accustomed only to Moderate doctrine were privileged to hear the truth of the gospel from the lips of the most eloquent men in Scotland.

One of the statesmen, who manifested up to his light a sincere interest in the welfare of the Church of Scotland, was the Earl of Aberdeen. He was not able to grasp the core of the matter until it was too late, and he showed rather a pettish spirit when his panacea was not accepted. But he did his best to heal the divisions which had taken place; and if the measure which he proposed had commanded the support of the General Assembly, it might also have been accepted by the Houses of Parliament. The measure, however, found no favour with the Evangelicals. It provided for a veto *with reasons*, which experience has since proved to be utterly unworkable, and it made no provision for securing the liberties of the Church. On this last ground, Chalmers offered to it a determined opposition.

“Sir,” said he, addressing the Assembly, “it is a leading principle of our Presbyterian constitution that there is a distinct government in the Church, which the State of course must approve ere it confers upon us its temporalities; or, in other words, that we have as uncontrolled a management of our own proper affairs as if we received not one farthing out of the national treasury; that when in the act of becoming an Establishment, we, in the brief and



emphatic deliverance of my friend Mr. Gray, 'gave them our services but not our liberties,' getting at their hands a maintenance for our clergy, and engaging in return for the Christian education of the people—a conjunction, we think, fruitful of innumerable blessings both to the Church and to Society, but in which the value given is many hundred times greater than the value received. Still, if the State be not satisfied with the bargain, they can at any time give us up. If, over and above our services in things spiritual, they must also have our submission in things spiritual, in these we have another Master, to whom, and to whom alone, we are responsible; and we utterly repudiate, as we should an accursed thing, the sacrilegious bribe that would tempt us from an allegiance to him: for that in these things he has the sole and undivided mastery, is a principle which lies at the very foundation of the Church of Scotland; and on her giving up this, as by the loosening of a corner or a key stone, the whole fabric will tumble into ruins. The establishment of this as the principle of our Church is the peculiar glory of Scotland, the fruit of a hard-won victory after the struggles and the persecutions of more than a hundred years. A principle which has cost us so much we are not now willing to let go; and if the State will insist on our surrender of it, or the forfeiture of our endowments, we are willing to try the experiment and to brave the same cost over again. It is a principle, sir, that we have not forgotten, though it has been renounced by a few declarationists among ourselves, and though it has faded away from the recollections and the feelings of general society, like an old charter which might slumber in its repositories for generations, while its articles remain unbroken, but which the rude hand of violence will recall

from its oblivion, and quickening it anew into vigour and vitality, will bring back, as if by resurrection, on the face and to the observation of the world. It is even so with the grand, the fundamental principle of our Church—its own inherent liberty in things ecclesiastical—familiar as household words, Bishop Burnet tells us, even to the humblest of our peasantry, but which, suffered to lie quiet for a century and a half, because let alone, had ceased at one time to be spoken of, and so fallen away from the memory, even from the understandings, of men. From 1688 to 1838—from the time of the Revolution settlement to the time when the Court of Session gave forth its interdict against the Presbytery of Dunkeld in the case of Lethendy—no civil power ever attempted to interfere with the steps of our ecclesiastical procedure, or to meddle with our Establishment in aught but the temporalities which belong to her. It was the disturbance given then which has aroused the Church, and will at length arouse the nation, from its dormancy. It threw us back on the first elements of a question which, from the days of our great-grandfathers, had been settled and set by. When conjured up again, it sounded like an antique paradox on many an ear; but minds are gradually opening to the truth and sacredness of our great principle, and we doubt not that the very agitations of this controversial period have flashed it more vividly and convincingly on the understandings of men than heretofore. Our ark is now in the midst of conflicting billows, but so that its flag is all the more unfurled by the storm which has raised them; and the inscription there, now spread forth and expanded in the gale, is making the motto of our Establishment patent to all eyes, that ‘the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church of Scotland.’ Sir, we have nailed this

colour to the mast, and will keep by it in all its fortunes, whether of tempest or of sunshine, through which the winds of heaven may carry it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church of Scotland; that is the watch-word of the party with whom I act; and is there none on the other side of the House to reiterate the cry? Yes, many, very many, perhaps all. And does not this justify the distinction of treatment that we are now making between the two questions of spiritual independence and of the Veto Law? And the only other distinction I would press in the opposite quarter, from which we have now heard a response so cheering, is that which obtains between a declaratory and an effective; will you join us in making it effective? I have the proud confidence that a goodly number of you will; and, furthermore, that you will assert by deeds as well as words, the great principle on which we stand. We may break into a thousand differences on the Veto Law,—of the sacred liberties of our Church there will be no surrender.”

The motion in the Assembly of 1841, for the deposition of the Strathbogie ministers, was made by Chalmers in a speech which breathed the same resolute spirit to maintain at all hazards the freedom of the Church. Referring to the plea which had been put forward on behalf of these men, that they had acted under the constraint of conscience, he said,—“Sir, I know not what the inward principle of the ministers of Strathbogie may have been, nor will I attempt any conjecture on the subject; but I do know that when forbidden by their ecclesiastical superiors to proceed any further with Mr. Edwards, they took him upon trial, and when suspended from the functions of the sacred ministry by a commission of the General Assembly, they continued to preach and to dispense the sacraments;

that they called in the aid of the civil power to back them in the exclusion from their respective parishes of clergymen appointed by the only competent court to fulfil the office which they were no longer competent to discharge; and, lastly, as if to place the top stone on the Babel of their proud and rebellious defiance, I know that, to the scandal and astonishment of all Scotland, and with a daring which I believe themselves would have shrunk from at the outset of their headlong career, they put forth their unlicensed hands on the dread work of ordination, and, as if in solemn mockery of the Church's most venerable forms, asked of the unhappy man who knelt before them if he promised to submit himself humbly and willingly, in the spirit of meekness, unto the admonitions of the brethren of the Presbytery, and to be subject to them and all other presbyteries and superior judicatories of this Church, and got back from him an affirmative response, along with the declaration that zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls, were his great motives and chief inducements to enter into the functions of the holy ministry, and not worldly designs and interests. Sir, I repeat I am not able to go into the depth and the mysteries of men's consciences; but this I am able to perceive, that if in heresy this plea were sustained, the Church would be left without a creed, and that if in contumacy this plea were sustained, the Church would be left without a government, both doctrine and discipline would be given to the winds, and our National Church were bereft of all her virtue to uphold the Christianity of the nation, when, thus helpless and degraded, she was alike unable to correct the errors, however deadly, or to control the waywardness, however pernicious and perverse, of her own children."

As the catastrophe approached, and the Government of the day grew more emphatic in its announcements that it meant to "stand by the law of the land as laid down by the civil tribunals of the country,"—in other words, that it would do nothing to make it possible for the men who had done most for the religious well-being of Scotland to remain within the National Establishment,—it became increasingly necessary that no doubt should be left on the public mind as to what would happen if the representatives of the State continued obstinate. In a long letter to Dr. John Bruce, dated April 1842, Dr. Chalmers urged the putting forth of a formal and final Claim of Rights, which would let the legislature clearly understand how matters stood, and leave the responsibility of what might follow upon it if the Claim were rejected.

In this letter he urged that all the prominence should be given to the point of spiritual independence. He was himself an earnest non-intrusionist, of course, and he would have been the last to agree to surrender again to the patrons those mischievous powers which they had been allowed by the Moderates to exercise; but he believed that that matter would, without much difficulty, be adjusted if the other interest were secured. And on this ground, and also because of its supreme individual importance, he argued that it would be wise not even to name non-intrusion in the declaration, but concentrate the attention of all concerned upon the one consideration, that if the Church was to do its proper work in the country, it must be left free from secular control.

"It is not for Parliament," said he, "to take up the ecclesiastical merits of the principle of non-intrusion, nor would I ask from them any opinion on a question which is ours, not theirs. It is an internal question wherewith

we alone have to do ; *the other is a boundary question*—the only proper one between the two parties—the line of demarcation between the civil and the ecclesiastical.”

“I feel it,” he said again, “a sort of injustice to the cause of our spiritual independence, or, which is tantamount to this, to the sacred cause of the Headship of Christ, to be condescending on the specific question of non-intrusion, when so high a matter is at issue as the great generic and comprehensive privilege which is inherent in every true Church of deciding this and all other purely ecclesiastical questions for themselves.”

And, he went on to say at the end, the kind of declaration he desired to see adopted was one in which those who agreed with him would proclaim “That, rather than give up the final jurisdiction of the Church in things ecclesiastical, they are willing, if the hand of power shall offer to inflict such a violence, to be stripped of all the rights and advantages which belong to them as the ministers of a National and Established Church.”

It strikingly illustrates the insight and shrewdness of Chalmers that at so early a date he put his finger so distinctly on the one point which has always proved since an insuperable difficulty in the way of adjusting satisfactorily the relations of Church and State in Scotland. Parliament has continued its vain and mistaken policy of trying to settle for the Church the internal question of how best to arrange the pastoral relation, while it has steadily refused to look at the “boundary question,” of where its province ends and that of the Church begins. It has not been at all successful in its efforts in the first connection ; and as for the second, while it remained unattended to, it would have seemed to such a man as Chalmers preposterous to ask if the Establishment were one such as he could re-enter.

It was natural that Chalmers should be accused of inconsistency in speaking so strongly as he did in 1838 of the great importance of a religious Establishment to a country, and in proposing four years later to take his Church out into the wilderness.

One of those who seem to have so remarked upon his conduct was Sir George Sinclair; and in a letter written at the close of 1841, he thus replies to his charges:—

“You speak of my former avowed preference for a National Establishment, reminding me of what you call my own theory. Now, in my London lectures, in my Church extension addresses, in all my controversies with the Voluntaries, in my numerous writings for thirty years back, the spiritual independence of the Church has been ever brought prominently forward as an indispensable part of that theory, and I have uniformly stated that the least violation of that independence in return for a State endowment was enough to convert a Church Establishment into a moral nuisance. It is a little too much, that after the Conservatives had accepted with thankfulness my defence of National Establishments, they should now propose to take away from me the benefit of their main vindication, or think that an advocacy given to a National Church, solely for the sake of its religious and moral benefits to the population, should still be continued, after they shall have converted it from an engine of Christian usefulness into a mere congeries of offices, by which to uphold the influence of patrons and subserve the politics or the views of a worthless partisanship.

“But you tell me of my views on the impotency of Voluntaryism. May I beg your perusal of my third London lecture on the distinction between Voluntaryism *ab intra* and Voluntaryism *ab extra*. There is a perfect



identity of principle between the latter and a National Establishment. I shall ever regret the necessity of a separation from the State ; but if driven to it by principle, it is a sacrifice which must and ought to be made. I say so not in the spirit of menace, or for the purpose of terrifying bull-headed Toryism out of any of its inveteracies, but simply to let you know that I for one shall feel it my duty to draw both on the middle and lower ranks, indefinitely, in order to repair, and I confidently hope to overpass, the mischief which I fear that our enemies, in the obstinacy of their miserable blindness, are preparing for our land."

In short, now as formerly, he was acting in character. What he was solicitous about above all things was the cause of Christ, and the question forced upon him was not the abstract one of whether the Church might not with advantage unite with the State, but the practical one of whether the only Establishment that was to be tolerated in Scotland could reasonably be expected to serve the highest ends of religion. He came deliberately to the conclusion that as a spiritual instrument it could not be made effective ; and with a courage and an elasticity of mind which awaken our intense admiration, he addressed himself, two years before the crisis came, to the consideration of what steps could be taken to carry on evangelical work without any help from the State whatever.

"I have retired," he wrote in September 1841, "from all further public or practical management of the question. The truth is, that I reserve myself for an emergency. Should there be a disruption of the Church, I shall feel it my duty to help forward the operations of a great home mission, which I have no doubt could take full possession of the country in a very few months. And looking to the

Christian interests of Scotland, I believe that more good could be done by such an instrumentality than by an Established Church exposed to such interferences as those of the Court of Session for the last few years.....I do not give up my views on the mighty good of a religious Establishment; but *it is a good more* than neutralized should the Establishment be so hampered and restricted as many would wish it to be who have really never studied the question of what the best method is for spreading abroad that education of principle which will prove the only counteractive, not to irreligion only, but to vice and anarchy and socialism, and the whole tribe of those moral and political disorders which are now in busy fermentation all over the land."

His fight for a free Established Church had ended in failure, and he was now to try another and very different experiment.

## CHAPTER X.

### ORGANIZATION OF A FREE DISESTABLISHED CHURCH.



EARLY forty years have now elapsed since the 18th of May 1843, but no one who was in Edinburgh that day is likely to have forgotten it. The present writer, then an under-graduate in the University, had been fortunate enough to secure a ticket of admission to St. Andrew's Church ; and he was among the crowd gathered in George Street at five o'clock in the morning, when the doors were opened to the public into the meeting-place of the General Assembly. Many long hours were before us ere the business was likely to begin, but it was a great thing to have secured a place in the front seat of the gallery ; and so intense was the excitement which was then abroad, that in looking back upon that time afterwards it never seemed to us as if there had been experienced during it anything like a sensation of weariness.

At last three o'clock arrived, and with it the Moderator, Dr. Welsh, who had been preaching the customary sermon in St. Giles's. I do not know that we who were spectators had any expectation that what followed would be transacted so rapidly. I rather think that we looked for some prolonged proceedings. It was all over, however, very soon. Dr. Welsh offered up a very solemn prayer, and

then, amid a silence which was almost painful in its intensity, he read a protest to the effect that, in respect that there had been an infringement on the liberties of the Church's constitution, so that the Assembly could not now be constituted without a violation of the terms of union between Church and State in this land, he could not consent to the business proceeding further. Laying this protest on the table, he left the chair and made his way toward the door of the church.

"Dr. Chalmers had been standing immediately on his left. He looked vacant and abstracted while the protest was being read, but Dr. Welsh's movement awakened him from his reverie. Seizing eagerly upon his hat, he hurried after him with all the air of one impatient to be gone."

And then slowly but steadily the depletion proceeded. As in the House of Commons, the two parties in the Assembly had been accustomed to occupy different sides of the chair. It so happened that the Evangelical benches were opposite the gallery in which I sat, and I saw accordingly row after row of the men with whose names we were all most familiar file deliberately out of the church and out of the National Establishment. The spectacle was so extraordinary, that for some time we looked on as if stunned. At last cries began to be heard—cries of admiration, of anger, of grief—and the crowded galleries became stirred like trees in a storm. As the exodus continued every part of the house grew emptier; great blanks appeared especially in the section of the house allotted to students of divinity, for the flower of the young men naturally followed their master. In a wonderfully short time, however, the process was completed; and the door having been finally shut on those whose struggles for freedom for so many long years back had been keeping the Church in commo-

tion, the victors settled down with a sigh of satisfaction to put the old house again in order.

The Veto Act—"our old friend," as Dr. Cook facetiously called it—was summarily repealed. The Strathbogie ministers were declared to be not a whit the worse of their deposition by the General Assembly. And all the extra parochial ministers who had been admitted to seats in presbyteries were sent back once more into the outer court of the sanctuary.

"If Government is firm," so wrote Dr. Cumming of London shortly before the Disruption, "I venture, from pretty accurate information, to assert that less than one hundred will cover the whole secession. The few manse and pulpits likely to be vacated will be filled up with good and holy ministers. *The missionary schemes of the Church will not be overthrown ; they will prosper more than they do now by being released from party domination and incessant quarrels and squabbings.*"

Thus the crisis was looked forward to with a light heart, as promising a return of internal peace with an increase of prosperity. There were miscalculations indeed as to the numbers who would go out. Not *one* hundred, but nearly *five* hundred ministers signed the Deed of Demission. But the sweep made of those likely to be troublesome was in consequence all the greater, and the chances of peace, at least, were, one might say, overwhelming. From the strictly Moderate point of view, then, the Disruption was a blessing. Certainly there could have been no hope of quietness in an unchanged Establishment, with men in it holding the views of Dr. Chalmers.

It does not appear, however, that the statesmen whose obstinacy in refusing all concession had rendered the catastrophe inevitable, continued to the end entirely satis-

fied with their work. Just ten years after 1843 Dr. Buchanan had occasion to wait upon Sir James Graham, and this is what he says about the interview :—

“Sir James Graham was at pains to tell us how deeply he regretted his share in bringing about the Disruption. He said ‘he would never cease to regard it with the deepest regret and sorrow as the saddest event in his life, that he should have had any hand in that most fatal act.’ He assured me that Lord Aberdeen’s sentiments on that subject were exactly the same as his own. He came over the subject again and again.”

These, at the time they were spoken, were vain regrets. The mischief was done, and it is very much easier to make breaches than to heal them. Besides, God has his own ways of working, and higher ends were perhaps served by the breaking up of the Church than could have been achieved by the conservation of its integrity. At the same time, it is important in connection with an event with which Chalmers had so great a concern that it should be made perfectly clear who were to blame in connection with it. The acts of the first Assembly held after the Disruption show unmistakably what party had triumphed. It was the party of Dr. Cook—that party which was in haste to proclaim that it approved of the principle of intrusion, and was prepared to submit in all things to the dictation of the Civil Courts. Where that party is now it would be difficult to say. It has been “rewarded” for its faithfulness by getting what it fought to the death against—namely, the abolition of patronage and popular election—and we are often assured that it now possesses what it did not in the least care for either, “spiritual independence.” But however all that may be, this is true, that if it had shown before 1843 half the anxiety to keep men in

the Establishment which it has manifested of late to win them back, there would not now be the ominously swelling cry for a separation of Church and State altogether. We must say again that nothing is more irrational than to speak of the Moderates as the calm, sober, wise, trustworthy men of their generation—the men who were not carried away by extremes, and to whom it would have been better for the country if it had oftener listened. The plain truth is, that their standpoint was always so low that they could not possibly take a correct view of their time and its tendencies. They obstinately clung to all, and they consequently risked all. When Dr. Cook jocularly proposed in 1843 to lay the Veto Act in its grave, he drove a nail in the coffin of the Establishment.

But to return to our story. While the remanent Assembly was in the way described making haste, at the bidding of the Civil Courts, to get back upon the old lines, an enterprise of a different sort was being launched elsewhere. The Disruptionists—a clear majority of all the members returned that year to the supreme court of the Church of Scotland—having formed into a column in the street, marched down to Canonmills, where an immense low-roofed hall, capable of containing three thousand people, had been prepared to receive them.

“I am proud of my country!” exclaimed Lord Jeffrey when he heard that more than four hundred had gone out. “There is not another country upon earth where such a deed could have been done!”

“A friend of mine,” wrote Mr. Gladstone to Dr. Robert Buchanan, “a conscientious and earnest-minded Roman Catholic, well acquainted with our country and language, once told me that, amidst his discouragements in witnessing the progress of unbelief in so many quarters, he had



found a singular comfort in the testimony borne by the ministers and members of the Free Church of Scotland to the authority of conscience and of positive religious belief."

The principle for which these men were prepared to suffer was an intelligible enough one. They counted it a matter of supreme importance that in a "free" State there should be a "free" Church—a Church protected against secular coercion and control in the execution of its functions; and they gave evidence of their determination to be satisfied with nothing less than that by sacrificing all their interest in the National Establishment. There were some that said, of course, that they were martyrs by mistake; but events have not confirmed that view, and at any rate they enjoyed for the time the substantial rewards which follow the keeping of a good conscience.

"Never," wrote Chalmers to his sister—"never was there a happier Assembly, with a happier collection of faces, than in our Free Church,—with consciences disburdened, and casting themselves without care and with all the confidence of children on the providence of that God who never forsakes the families of the faithful."

When the commotion attendant on taking possession of the new house had subsided, Dr. Welsh proceeded with the business which belonged to his office, and which had been interrupted by the incident of the Disruption. It has been long the custom in the Scottish Church for the retiring Moderator to name his successor, and, after prayer, this was what Dr. Welsh went on to do.

"I feel assured," said he, "that the eyes of every individual in this Assembly, the eyes of the whole Church and country are directed to one individual, whom to name is to pronounce his panegyric. In the exhausted state in

which my duties have left me, it is scarcely in my power to say more; but indeed I feel that more would be superfluous. The extent of his labours in connection with our present position would justly entitle Dr. Chalmers [the mention of Dr. Chalmers's name here was received with extraordinary enthusiasm, the whole of the vast audience rising, cheering for some minutes with the utmost enthusiasm, and the house presenting a perfect forest of hats and handkerchiefs]—would justly entitle that great man to hold the first place in this our meeting. But surely it is a good omen, or, I should say, a token for good from the great Disposer of all events and the alone Head of the Church, that I can propose, to hold this office, an individual who, by the efforts of his genius and his virtues, is destined to hold so conspicuous a place in the eyes of all posterity."

On taking the chair, Chalmers proposed that the proceedings should be resumed with another service of praise and prayer; and as the great congregation of three thousand souls, all thrilling with suppressed enthusiasm, sang the words,—

"O send thy light forth and thy truth;  
Let them be guides to me,"

a sudden burst of sunlight filled the building, and recalled to many present the text from which the Moderator had preached six months before: "Unto the upright light shall arise in the darkness."

Dr. Welsh, it will be noticed, referred in his speech to something which Chalmers had already done for the Church in its new position. It was well understood that he had in his mind, among other things, the wise arrangements which had been made by him with a view to the maintenance of a disestablished ministry.

There was nothing fanatical in the proceedings of the

men who told the Government and the country that if the principles of Intrusion and Erastianism were to be forced upon them, as conditions of continuing in the Establishment, they would be obliged to resign their interest in its endowments. When the catastrophe seemed inevitable, they deliberately addressed themselves to prepare for it. Like Noah, they not only professed to believe in the coming of a flood, but gave proof to all men that they really did so by setting about the building of an ark for the saving of the house. And so, when the first Assembly settled to its work, it did not find that it required to look with a blank face into the future, and to consider *ab initio* what it were best for it to begin with. Thanks to the inventive genius and splendid administrative talent of Chalmers, there was a financial report ready to be submitted to it. Six hundred and eighty-seven associations for the collection of funds for the support of the ministry had (this report said) been already organized. Two hundred and thirty-nine of these had actually sent money to the extent of £17,000 to the general treasury ; and it was announced that, if even the rate of giving that had commenced were no more than maintained, an annual income was promised of £74,000.

“Had the goodly results,” said Chalmers, who of course was convener of the financial committee, “which I have to-day presented to you been a few months ago spoken of as either possible or probable, the anticipation would have been regarded, as, in fact, my expressed conviction at that time generally was regarded, as a vision of Utopia. We know not what the feelings of such are when, instead of presenting the matter to the eyes of their understanding, we now place it before the eyes of their senses. Sure we are it is far easier practically to do the thing than to convince the people

that the thing was practicable. The difficulty lay not in the doing of the work when begun, but wholly in getting it begun; not in the execution of the process after its commencement, but in overcoming the incredulity which stood as a barrier in the way of its commencement.....I doubt not there are a good many here who heard me predict such a result as that which I have to-day laid before you; and I trust you will forgive me for stating, though I am not a professor of physiognomy, that when I chanced to lift my eyes off the paper to the countenances of those who were before me, I observed in them a good-natured leer of incredulity, mixed up, no doubt, with a benignant complacency, which they cast on the statements and high-coloured representations of a very sanguine Utopia. In order to overcome this incredulity in my own little sphere, and in a parish where eight-ninths of the aristocracy of the soil are against us, I did begin a little association,—I mean the parish of Morningside. But we remained for six whole weeks in a state of single blessedness; we had not a single companion, but stood as a spectacle to be gazed at with a sort of gaping wonder, till we actually felt our situation painful, felt as if we stood on a pillory. But now that we have been followed by no less than six hundred and eighty-seven associations, our singularity, we begin to feel, sits rather gracefully upon us.

“At the hazard of being regarded as a Utopian this second time, and at this new stage of our advance, I will make as confident an avowal now as I made then, that if we only make a proper use of the summer that is before us in stirring up, I do not say the people of Scotland, but that portion of them who are the friends of our Protestant Church,—if we do what we might, and what we ought, we will not only be able to repair the whole Disruption,

but will get landed in the great and glorious work of Church extension. For you will recollect, that though the application of the first portion of the funds goes towards, I will not say the support of the ejected ministers, but towards the upholding of the continuance of their services, yet after that is secured, and after the maximum has been attained, the over and above sums contributed will go, not to the augmentation of ministerial income, but to the augmentation of ministerial services; not to the increase of the salaries of the ministers, but to the increase of their numbers; and we shall not stop short, I trust, in our great and glorious enterprise, till, in the language you have already heard, 'the light of the gospel be carried to every cottage-door within the limits of the Scottish territory.' This will open a boundless field for the liberality of our Christian brethren; a bright and beautiful ulterior, to which every eye should be directed, that each may have in full view the great and glorious achievement of a Church commensurate with the land in which we dwell, and every heart be elevated by the magnificent aim to cover with the requisite number of churches, and, with God's blessing on the means, Christianity to educate, and, in return for our performance and prayers, to Christianize the whole of Scotland."

It is very plain, from all this, what were Chalmers's most earnest hopes in connection with the Disruption. What he thought of was not the triumph of a sect. Believing, as he did, that it was the great stream of Evangelical life that had been flowing through the Establishment which was now diverted into a new channel, he followed in thought and faith its future course, and his argument, in effect, was this, that there was nothing in the circumstance of its having lost the support of the State to

hinder its going on and sweeping over the whole land. And so far his prognostications have been fulfilled. There is no district of the country so poor or remote that the Free Church has been unable to supply ordinances to it. The ministry of that Church has grown from four hundred and seventy to over one thousand, and the Sustentation Fund, which began with £74,000 a year, now yields £176,000.

In the speech from which a quotation has just been given, Chalmers refers to an occasion on which he had observed an incredulous smile pass over the faces of his auditors. He alludes to the "Convocation," a remarkable assembly of ministers who gathered together in November 1842, to consult together confidentially about the affairs of the Church. In the hearing of these ministers he unfolded at great length his views of a Sustentation Fund, and of the principles on which he looked forward with confidence to the organization of a Free Disestablished Church. Here all those resources became available which he had been accumulating from the time when he began his study of mathematics and of political economy.

One of his great points was this,—the power of littles. He did not undervalue the large contributions of the rich, but he knew that these must necessarily be few and precarious. What he relied upon was the steady giving of the many. "Men," he said, "in their hurried and wholesale contemplation of things, are apt to be carried away by generalities, and under an overwhelming sense of an extreme and universal helplessness among the common people, think that nothing is to be had from them. The only way of dislodging and dissipating that impression is by going piecemeal to work, and making the actual trial in one parish or vicinity after another."

He then went on to tell of a clerical friend from Skye, who said that it was vain to hope that anything could be got from his quarter, but who, when asked if a penny a week might not be expected from each household, answered, that "if I came down to such a nothing, such a bagatelle as that, it could be easily afforded."

"Now," Chalmers went on to say, "it is just by a putting together of such 'bagatelles' that I arrive at my conclusions; and I therefore repeat that, as far as the means are concerned, we could obtain—and it is the very least and lowest computation we should think of making—we could obtain, after the loss of all our endowments, the sum of £100,000 in the year for the support of a Christian ministry in Scotland, without sensible encroachment on the comfort of any, without so much as the feeling of a sacrifice."

It was when he spoke of a hundred thousand a year that the glint of incredulity passed over his audience. The good man, they all felt, was indeed in Utopia. But it is a grand testimony to the far-seeing sagacity of the economist that all that he predicted has come more than true. The end was not accomplished at once. The machine, before it got into thorough working order, had to contend with many difficulties; and the heart of its first director was sometimes fretted with the friction which these difficulties produced. But it is impossible to deny that his scheme has proved a magnificent success; and, more than that, that the whole Protestant world has benefited by it! There is hardly one English speaking Church which has not appropriated the very name he suggested for his fund. A new word came into use in consequence of that famous speech of his in the Convocation; and in an age when disestablished Churches have become, and are likely to become, more common, it is important that so many



valuable hints exist as to the way in which such Churches can be most efficiently organized.

Of course the sustentation of the ministry was but one among the many things which required to be attended to at this time. Six hundred congregations were suddenly placed in circumstances requiring church accommodation, and places of worship of any description could not be provided for these all at once. Happily the summer of 1843 was an unusually beautiful one, and to meet in the open air was, as a rule, not at all an intolerable hardship. The very change in the aspect of things proved beneficial. Ministers who had sacrificed their all for conscience' sake were naturally in a more fervid state of mind, and the people heard better. So that, without any question, the time came to be one of great religious revival. The event which broke up the Church of Scotland brought a new life to many souls.

Chalmers was then living in Morningside, and for a time he turned his own house into a church; "and perhaps he never occupied a more picturesque position than when, planted midway up the staircase, he preached to a disjointed congregation scattered into different rooms, all of whom could hear, but not half of whom could see, the clergyman."

He also made an extensive tour in the autumn in the interest of the Sustentation Fund. On that occasion his object was to gather around him the actual workers for the scheme in each locality, and to talk to them in a familiar way about how best to perform the service they had undertaken. But when the Sabbaths came round he was of course required to preach, and wherever he went crowds came to hear him. On one of those days he was in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen, and the good people of

that city would gladly have had him conduct worship in their largest hall ; but he preferred “a rural Sabbath,” and accepted the invitation to preach instead in a tent at Banchory.

“But little thought I,” said he himself, in afterwards recounting his experiences, “that, notwithstanding the day and the hour, and even the rain of this day, there were to assemble six or seven thousand, some say ten thousand people ; and so the pulpit had to be carried half a mile from the Free Church tent to the front door of Banchory House, where I could preach under cover, with a lobby full of grandees behind me, and such a multitude before me as presented what the Opium-eater calls an ocean of human faces. The people occupied all the gravel before the house, and all the grassy lawn, wet as it was, to the trees, whose foliage gave back the sound, so that the echo came back upon our ears and prolonged each line so as to compel a pause from the precentor in a way that was somewhat ludicrous. Nevertheless, I was completely heard ; and, having Mr. Archibald, a probationer, to conduct all but the sermon, I got over the whole with marvellously little fatigue. The open air in front, and freedom from all heat and stifling, made it far easier for me than if I had been in the tent.”

Dr. Chalmers’s text upon this occasion was his favourite one from Isaiah xxvii. 4, 5: “Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.” “The breathless interest,” says Mr. Thomson, “with which the people listened was very striking ; and the blessed fruits of that discourse will all be known only at the great day.”

The remarkable combination of qualities in Chalmers's character never came out more strikingly than in the time of which we are now speaking. His enthusiasm stirred all who came into contact with it, and yet his practical sagacity never forsook him for a moment. His faith in God was entire, so that he believed, in the most unaffected way, that He would provide for all who conscientiously tried to serve him; but this confidence never tempted him to expect miracles. All the more that he trusted in the certainty of a providential government did he make it his aim to use such means for gaining his ends as wisdom pointed out to be suitable. And with all this there mingled the genial humour which saw the grotesque side of things and threw his audiences at times into convulsions of laughter.

Toward the close of each session, after the Disruption, he was accustomed to give to his students a lecture on "Economics." On one of these occasions he told the story of a visit he had paid to a congregation in the north, which he was anxious to stir up to greater liberality. This story he began to tell with the utmost gravity, and not one of his auditors had, to begin with, the slightest suspicion that anything ludicrous was to come out of it. He had, he went on to say, a meeting with the office-bearers, and explained to them with great fulness and explicitness his famous principle of "the power of littles." By the help of arithmetic he showed that if a penny a week were contributed by so many people, so much money would be raised at the end of the year; and if that arrangement were only carried out throughout the entire country, the income of the Church would amount to quite a fabulous sum. Dealing, as he believed he was, with minds somewhat slow to take in a new idea, he dwelt upon his scheme

at considerable length, iterating and reiterating the principal points in it ; and at the close he came away with the comfortable conviction that he had made a distinct and lasting impression. What was his chagrin, however, to hear how all his labour had been viewed. [Here, as the crisis of the story approached, the venerable professor drew himself up, as if he were going to utter words of strong indignation, while his eyes twinkled and his lips twitched.] One of the office-bearers who had been present was asked next day how he had liked the meeting. "Pretty well," was his reply. "Doctor Chalmers is nae doubt a clever man ; but, oh ! he is UNCO WORLDLY !" It may be imagined that for some minutes after this the discipline of the class was nowhere. The loving-hearted old man, whose life had been one long act of unselfish devotion to the cause of Christ and the good of his fellow-men, could well afford to tell to his students such a tale against himself ; and the rehearsal of it served a purpose, for many a time since has the story been employed to rebuke the pseudo-spirituality of those who pretend to think it a degradation to allude to the outward business of the house of the Lord.


Chalmers's own special work was at once resumed by him when the winter session in November came round. He retired, of course (in company with Dr. Welsh) from the University ; but temporary premises in George Street having been secured for class-rooms, he began to lecture there to those students who desired to study for the Free Church. Of the New College thus instituted he was made the Principal, his colleagues being Dr. Welsh, for church history ; Dr. Cunningham, for apologetics ; and Dr. Black, for Biblical criticism. The fire of his earlier years had in some degree abated, but his lectures were most interesting, stimulating, and instructive ; and now and again the old

flame blazed out afresh, as when any new subject attracted him and he followed the German plan of devoting to it a short special course.

Thus, as the originator of its system of finance, as an active helper in the rebuilding of the broken walls, as the president of its seminary for the training of its future ministry, and in innumerable other ways, he contributed effectively to the formation of a free disestablished Church.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LAST YEARS.

“ HERE is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.’ So there is that divideth, and it tendeth to unity. So was it with the Disruption. Blamed by many as a schismatic act, a great prompter to and promoter of division, no public incident of our times has done more to bring together into one the scattered Churches of the Reformation.”

Thus writes Dr. Hanna; and there are no truer words in all his admirable biography.

Certainly this is the fact, at any rate, that Chalmers was not made narrower by the Disruption. It would have been difficult for him indeed to become so in view of the experiences he had to go through. As Moderator, it fell to him to receive the expressions of sympathy which were sent to the Free Church, immediately after its establishment, by other communions; and when post after post brought him addresses and resolutions from Churches, of the very existence of some of which he was before unaware, he was gratified beyond measure.

“I have felt,” said he, “exceedingly delighted with these communications. I must say that I consider it as infinitely more characteristic of the religion which we profess—the religion of peace and charity—that instead of

each denomination sitting aloft and apart upon its own hill, and frowning upon each other from their respective orbits, they should hold kindly and mutual converse, and see each other eye to eye, while they will discern, to their mutual astonishment, if not how thoroughly, at least how substantially they are at one.....Now is the time to rally about the common standard of all that is pure and vital in Protestantism."

In the Assembly of 1845, he had a most interesting opportunity of giving expression again to similar sentiments. Merle D'Aubigné, the historian, along with Frederic Monod of Paris and Mr. Kuntze of Berlin, had come to represent their respective Churches as deputies to the Free Church, and Dr. Chalmers undertook to introduce the distinguished foreigners to the Assembly. The scene will always be remembered by those who witnessed it. The great hall at Canonmills was crowded to the ceiling from end to end, and D'Aubigné, who wrote afterwards an account of his reception, tells that when Chalmers appeared, "the whole audience rose, shouted, clapped their hands, and waved hats and handkerchiefs."

Rising, when the time came for him to speak, with that air of unobtrusive and unaffected simplicity which always sat upon him so gracefully, he said, "The high and honourable office has been assigned to me of announcing the presence in this Assembly of certain evangelical and much esteemed ministers from various places on the Continent. At the present juncture of affairs, I cannot but regard the appearance of such men amongst us as providential. If ever there was a time when the friends of a scriptural faith and a free gospel should draw closer together, surely it is now, when the spiritual tyranny of former days is raising its head again, and threatens to resume its



ancient lordship over the consciences of men. It is possible that for the maintenance of our liberty we may again be called upon for the same sacrifices, for the same struggles of principle with power, for the same heartfelt devotion to a noble cause, for the same lofty and intrepid doings on the side of Christian principle, which were put forth in Germany, under the championship of one whom I need not name, because for three centuries he has been known and revered over all Christendom as the hero of the Reformation. And, sir, I am delighted to think—it makes me feel as if I were now at the most interesting moment of my existence, when I can point to one of those strangers whom, in this great Assembly, I need as little to name—who is universally known as the historian of the Reformation.”

Dr. Chalmers proceeded then to speak of the works of M. Merle and of the many interesting ties which bound together Geneva and Scotland. But the personal and the national were soon lost in a wider topic. “I hail,” said he, “the footsteps of those friends from the Continent, because I know that one, and I believe that all of them, may be regarded as the apostles of Christian union; and I do hope that their presence among us, and their conversation with the ministers of various denominations, will have the effect of expediting that sacred cause in this country. I trust you will not charge me with over-liberality if I say, as I do from my conscience, that among the great majority of evangelical dissenters in this country I am not aware of any topics of difference which I do not regard as so many men of straw; and I shall be exceedingly delighted if these gentlemen get the heads of the various denominations to meet together, and consent to make a bonfire of them.”

These aspirations did not end altogether in words. Out of the feelings which they awakened, and which appeared simultaneously in many minds, sprang an organization which still exists—the Evangelical Alliance. It has not realized all the expectations which were formed in regard to it. What Chalmers dreaded has to some extent come about, at least so far as its operations at home are concerned. There have been “large periodical assemblages, where first-rate speakers have made eloquent demonstrations, while there has been on the whole a lack of the materials of real business.” At the same time, it has done noble service in its day, and promises to do still more; and we may yet see it fulfilling Chalmers’s ideal—that, first, of a great anti-Popish association, and, second, *of a great home mission.*

About the last point he was particularly solicitous, believing, as he did, that “to walk together in the field of Christian philanthropy is a likely preparation for thinking together on the questions of the Christian faith.” This was but one side of perhaps his favourite maxim, that unto the upright light arises in the darkness. Holding, as he did emphatically with Vinet, that “the axioms of men *innocent* have become the problems of men *fallen*,” he often taught that the surest road to right thinking was right doing; and hence, in urging active co-operation among professing Christians about all good things, he had no doubt that he was recommending the method by which unity could soonest be reached.

“Let us,” he pled, “be one in well-doing; and this, wherever there is real sincerity and right good earnest, will prove the highroad to being one in sentiment. A oneness in conduct will often lead to an essential oneness of creed; for the reflex influence of the former upon the

latter is far greater than perhaps logicians and controversialists in theology are willing to allow. And so we may speed onward the accomplishment of our blessed Saviour's prayer—even that palpable unity among Christians which he has announced as an indispensable stepping-stone to the world's regeneration."

His hopes in this connection were not fulfilled. The Alliance became without any difficulty an Anti-Popish Association; but when it began to face the question of the reclamation of the waste places at home from heathenism, it was met by difficulties arising from the presence of organizations already in the field.

But Chalmers's mind, having secured rest from controversy, was now turning intently again toward old interests. The spiritual destitution of the country was what most oppressed him, and he could not assent to give over planning for the relief of that merely because he was disappointed of help in one particular quarter. If Christian men of all denominations could not see their way to join in home missionary effort, he must, if necessary, throw himself into the breach single-handed. And this was practically what he did.

Singling out what was at the time one of the worst districts of Edinburgh—that of the West Port—he resolved to devote his remaining strength to its evangelization. In doing this, he had more in view than the good of that one locality. He wished to "work off one model or normal specimen of the process by which a single locality may be reclaimed from the wilderness," and then to press it on the imitation of other philanthropists.

As a preparation for his work, he delivered four public lectures in Edinburgh, in which he showed the advantages of the territorial system, and in which also he proclaimed

in an emphatic way the catholicity of the spirit by which he was animated. Because he was a Free Churchman, it was of course most natural and convenient that he should employ Free Church agencies; but he said, with great vehemence of expression, "Who cares about the Free Church, compared with the Christian good of the people of Scotland? Who cares about any Church, but as an instrument of Christian good? for, be assured that the moral and religious well-being of the population is of infinitely higher importance than the advancement of any sect."

These are the sentiments we have met with at all points in his history. A Church to him was not an end but a means; and it at once lost in his eyes the very reason of its existence, when, either through its own inefficiency, or through the restraints put upon it from without, it became incapable of contributing as it should to the promotion of evangelical religion.

When the West Port statistics were taken up, the district was found to be in a deplorable state. "Out of a gross population of two thousand, three-fourths of the whole, or about fifteen hundred of the inhabitants, were living—within sound of many a Sabbath bell, and with abundance of contiguous church accommodation—lost to all the habits and all the decencies of the Christian life."

Throwing himself into this region, he set agoing all the machinery which, from his experience in Glasgow, he knew to be indispensable; and the success which ere long attended his efforts was most cheering. Within less than three years he was able to say to Mr. Tasker, his invaluable coadjutor in the work, and the first minister of the territory, "I have got now the desire of my heart—the church is finished, the schools are flourishing, our ecclesiastical machinery is about complete, and all in good working

order. God has indeed heard my prayer, and I could now lay down my head in peace and die."

A day later he wrote thus to a friend in New York: "I wish to communicate what to me is the most joyful event of my life. I have been intent for thirty years on the completion of a territorial experiment, and I have now to bless God for the consummation of it. Our church was opened on the 19th of February, and in one month my anxieties respecting an attendance have been set at rest. Five-sixths of the sittings have been let; but the best part of it is, that three-fourths of these are from the West Port, a locality which, two years ago, had not one in ten churchgoers from the whole population. I presided myself on Sabbath last over its first sacrament. There were one hundred and thirty-two communicants, and one hundred of them from the West Port."

The work thus auspiciously begun did not turn out to be of an evanescent character. The congregation continued steadily to grow, until, in 1879, it was able to report a membership of over eleven hundred.

In such quiet walks of usefulness did Chalmers proceed, almost without interruption, till his death. He met with trials and disappointments, as was to have been expected, for the millennium had not come in his day. There were obstinate men, for example, who would not listen to reason on the subject of ecclesiastical economics, and he was rather disheartened at times when he thought of the prospects of practical Voluntaryism. But if he had lived long enough he would have seen his principles accepted, and consequences following from them which would have brightened his whole horizon. And as it was, these disappointments did not in any way affect injuriously the sweetness of his nature, or disturb his relation to the great testimony of his life.

Once again only was he called forth to discharge a public duty under the eye of the whole nation.

Just as before the Disruption there were some who believed that nobody would "go out," so after that event there were some who were fully persuaded that those who went out would speedily return. Among these last were certain great landholders, like the Dukes of Sutherland and Buccleuch, who, concluding that all that was wanted to suppress the Free Church was a little *firmness*, refused to grant sites for building purposes to the outed congregations on their estates. This course was followed by so many, and the hardships inflicted grew so serious, that at last Parliament was moved to agree to the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry.

Among other witnesses, Chalmers was summoned to give evidence, and, with this object in view, he went up to London on the 7th of May 1847.

What he said on this occasion is important on this account, that a singular persuasion exists in certain quarters that he altered his views of things at the last, and became convinced that even a bound and restricted established Church is better than one which is disestablished but free. Rumours of a like sort have always been rife about great men who have broken away from the established order of things. How often, for instance, has the world been told of the "recantation" of Dr. Döllinger. It is natural to wish to break down the testimony of such men, but it ought perhaps to be more frequently remembered that the interests of morality suffer more than the cause of a party gains when a man is, without any substantial excuse, represented as having turned his back in old age upon the most earnest teachings of his previous life.

The same month which saw Chalmers in the presence of

the Sites Committee saw him also called away to answer for himself at a higher tribunal ; and the following sentences, therefore, may well be taken as expressing his final judgment upon the great question which rent the Church of Scotland asunder :—

“ It has been stated in this Committee that the points upon which the Free Church differ from the Established Church are mere points of technicality, and that they have no real substance in them ; will you state what you consider to be the distinctive principle between the Free Church and the Established Church ?—The distinctive principle some people call ‘ spiritual independence.’ I think that there is a difference of nomenclature between the English and Scotch, and that our cause is a good deal misunderstood in virtue of that. I would say that the final jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts in things sacred is the great principle upon which we have gone out, that that final jurisdiction has been violated, and that it is not a capricious or unheard-of novelty. It has been held in Scotland for more than two centuries. It was the great question between the Jameses and Charleses on the one hand, and the Scottish people on the other, who called it the Headship of Christ—the term given to the principle when looked to in a religious light. But when looked to constitutionally, it is termed the final jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts or Church courts in things sacred, as distinct from things civil. Now, it is sometimes expressed in this way by a Scotchman. He speaks of it as the supremacy of the Church over all things *ecclesiastical*, which is very apt to mislead the understanding of Englishmen, because I presume that any question connected with the ministerial office, and which related to the ‘ civilia ’ of that office, would in England be called an ecclesiastical cause, and is



decided by the civil courts. Now, there is a distinction in the very constitution of our courts to every understanding which makes this matter clear with us. There are ecclesiastical courts that are constituted of the kirk-session, the Presbytery, the Synod, and General Assembly; and there are civil courts. We call matters decided by those courts ecclesiastical matters, because our habit has been all along to refer things sacred to the ecclesiastical courts, and which never passed from the ecclesiastical courts to the civil courts. Those are things sacred, but our calling them things ecclesiastical is very apt to mislead English people, under the idea that we claim the supremacy over the 'civilia' as well as the 'sacra' of the ministerial office. Now, there is nothing more distinct in a Scotch mind than the proper function of the ecclesiastical court, which is to take up things sacred, and the proper function of the civil court, which is to take up things secular connected with the ministerial office, such as glebe, stipend, church or place of worship, and the manse or parsonage house, and other matters of the same kind which might be very easily enumerated.

"Do you think that the Church of Scotland, as at present established by law, have recognized on the part of the State a jurisdiction in matters spiritual and sacred, and against which the people of Scotland have strongly contended in times past?—Yes, I think they have completely obliterated that line of demarcation which we always thought divided the civil from the ecclesiastical courts.

"In so crossing that line of demarcation they have adopted the principles which are generally known in Scotland by the name of Erastian principles?—Yes."


During this his last visit to London, Chalmers seems to

have enjoyed himself thoroughly. He made several new acquaintances, such as the Bishop of Gloucester and Sir Charles Lyell. He took a great delight in visiting the Athenæum, of which he had been admitted a member. He preached twice—once in London in a Presbyterian church, and again in Gloucestershire in an Independent chapel; and in his letters home, giving an account of intercourse with relatives and friends, he manifested a light-someness which seemed to promise the probability of years of active service. Among the calls he made in London was one on Thomas Carlyle. “I had,” he says, “lost all L recollection of him, though he told me of three interviews, and having breakfasted with me in Glasgow. A strong-featured man, and of strong sense. We were most cordial and coalescing, and he very complimentary and pleasant; but his talk was not at all Carlylish—much rather the plain and manly conversation of good ordinary common sense, with a deal of hearty laughing on both sides. The points on which I was most interested were his approval of my territorial system, and his eulogy on direct thinking, to the utter disparagement of those subjective philosophers who are constantly thinking upon thinking.”

This was written on May 14. On the 30th of the same month he retired to his room in his own house at Morning-side, after bidding his family a genial good-night. “I never saw him happier,” writes one who happened to be his guest that evening. “Christian benevolence beamed from his countenance, sparkled in his eye, and played upon his lips.” Next morning he did not appear as usual, and hearing no sign of movement within the apartment, a member of his household entered, opened the shutters, drew aside the curtain, and saw that he was dead!

## CHAPTER XII.

### A BACKLOOK.

“F any one really wants to know what manner of man Chalmers was, he must study his ‘Daily Scripture Readings’ and his ‘Horæ Sabbaticæ.’ ”

So said lately one of the men who sat at his feet in St. Andrews and Edinburgh, and who, like a good many others still surviving, cherish affectionately the recollection not of their great master’s eloquence merely, or even chiefly, but of his fervid and unaffected piety. When a controversy is proceeding involving even fundamental matters, the question of its practical effects upon those who engage in it will always be determined by the extent to which they maintain a personal intercourse with God. All conflicts tend to grow more or less bitter, and during their continuance things are apt to be said which in calmer moments are regretted. How Chalmers was enabled to fight the battle which issued in the blighting of so many of his hopes, in such a way as to leave little that was painful behind, is explained in the private diary which he kept contemporaneously. There we see what was his resource in all trouble, and what were the deepest motives which influenced him throughout his public life. Men of the world might accuse him of having crooked purposes to

serve, but he could conceal nothing from God; and in these most unmistakably genuine confessions we see the undisguised workings of an honest and spiritually enlightened soul.

Suppose Chalmers had not been arrested, like Saul, to be used in the interest of the gospel, but had been left to pursue the course which he first took up, what would have been the character of his life? It is, perhaps, vain to speculate; but we may so far entertain the question for a moment, in order that we may the better realize, in connection with his history, our indebtedness to divine grace.

That he was a man of the highest order of mind—in other words, that he possessed the quality of *genius*—cannot be doubted by any one who has made his biography a study. He beheld all things with an open face—that is, he saw all around him with his own eyes, not with the eyes of others. Supporting this faculty of observation was one of *insight*. He noticed with rapidity similarities, contrasts, analogies; and hence he seldom wrote or spoke about anything without suggesting some new thought about it, or putting it in a new light. Originality was a feature in all his writings, whether he discoursed on the stars, or economics, or religion. He had in him, therefore, a natural force which could never have been content to lie quiescent, or to move inconspicuously in commonplace channels.

We may assume, then, that the world would have heard of him, even if he had never become a preacher. But what sort of reputation would he have achieved in that case? He would have become, probably, a great mathematician or *scientist*; and as it was not in his nature to do things by halves, we should have seen him taking the lead at congresses, discussing the origin of matter, or fighting,

as if the welfare of the world depended on it, for some knotty point connected with the obliquity of the ecliptic. Perhaps—who knows?—something more serious might have happened. The relation of a mind like his to Christianity could not be always that of indifference or neutrality. If he had not been moved to come over to its side, he might have been led to lift up his hand against it, and so to the hostile forces of the present day might have been added the element of a soul which, whether for good or for evil, would be always influential.

The great lesson of Chalmers's life, then, is the same as that which is suggested by the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. God needed a man to roll back the tide of irreligion, and to make his Church in Scotland better serve its ends; and the man was found among that very class of ministers (the Moderates) who were most unfriendly to the supernatural in religion. Hence his call was a great act of grace.

What he would have done had not God found him, we can only guess. What he did accomplish, in consequence of his being found of God, is matter of history. That divine touch, which altered the direction of his life, made him a lasting blessing to his country; and as we glance back upon his career, and see what grace enabled him to do, we are led anew to think what a bright new century there would be for Scotland if the Spirit were to exercise His sovereign power and divert some of the energy now given to the world into the channel of the gospel.

THE END.









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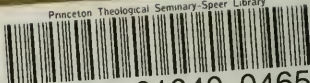
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